

## DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

### Effective early childhood educators developing a methodology for improvement

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# **EFFECTIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS: DEVELOPING A METHODOLOGY FOR IMPROVEMENT**

**Volume 2**

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## **Chapter 5: Methodology**

### **5.1 Choice of Paradigm**

In deciding on an appropriate methodology for this study I adopted Robson's (1993) dictum of being 'deliberately promiscuous'. Although the research was firmly embedded in the naturalistic paradigm, I felt I did not want to be restricted to one particular approach but wanted the freedom to make use of whatever methodology seemed necessary to meet a particular issue. I was catholic and eclectic in my choice of strategies but essentially committed to a 'real world enquiry' (Robson 1993). Much enquiry in the real world is some form of evaluation and, given the principles and the thrust of the wider EEL Project (Pascal and Bertram, 1992), a multi-method stance seemed appropriate.

There are strongly held views in the field of early childhood (Sylva, 1995; Leseman, 1995;) that the divide between the 'clean' scientific, positivist paradigm and the 'messy' pragmatism of naturalistic approaches should be kept well separated. Some question the attempt, as they see it, to replace research with praxis, in the form of abstracted reflection on practice (van Kuyk, 1995). Dey (1993) maintains that, 'Description has a low status in social science' p.31 and for some working in early year's research there is a fear that anything other than the most rigorously controlled empirical approach will be dismissed as 'soft'. From this viewpoint, early years' work, already confronted with issues of status, prejudice and inequality, needs the empiricism of the physical sciences, if it is going to be seen as a credible research field in the wider academic community (Sylva, 1995). This seems to me to be giving a misplaced sense of importance to those who are working in fields which are not

our own and who often do not have an informed knowledge of the intricacies of the work. We can, undoubtedly, learn from colleagues researching in other spheres, particularly anthropology, psychology, sociology and medicine, but we should not subsume the need to develop appropriate tools for our own field to techniques more suited to the work of others. Nor should we feel limited by debatable ideas of objectivity. Rather, the solution is to develop methodologies and strategies which are uniquely suited to the needs of early years' researchers and practitioners, (Pascal and Bertram, 1993; Bertram, 1995). If one looks at other emergent disciplines and fields of study, it is possible to see how recognition was achieved by adopting just such a strategy. The first Chair of Prehistoric Archaeology was founded in 1927 at Edinburgh, after a long struggle to be recognised as a separate field from history (Laing and Laing, 1987). Archaeology does not just dwell in history but in cultural studies, sociology and language, politics and behaviour. It calls on mathematics, chemistry, climatology and biochemistry. It is found in pollen locked in soil levels, in genetics and in the radioactive isotope of carbon. Archaeology is not just about digging and looking; it raids whatever field it needs and it has become stronger for that. The emergence of Archaeology as a discipline in its own right and its subsequent development has lessons for those attempting to establish a recognised field of study in early childhood education.

Early childhood education studies must become strong and eclectically voracious. It is important to the status of the field that not only do we do this credibly, rigorously and systematically, but that we also create our own strategies and techniques and are not simply dependent on the traditions of the past. We need to do this for several reasons. Firstly, I believe that given the



growth, internationally, in institutionalising ever younger children, the quality of that provision needs to be studied closely and appropriate techniques need to be developed. It is fundamental to an understanding of the nature of society, to the needs of the individual as a child, and to the fulfilment of adults. Secondly, provision for children and their carers in the rapidly changing social and economic climate needs to be monitored and supported, but the participants should have a stakehold in the debate. Research should incorporate different viewpoints and should be accessible. Thirdly, research should have some practical application or outcome which will serve the needs of young children and their carers. Research, therefore, that does not accept the messiness of the lived experience, that seeks to exclude richness in an attempt to isolate variables, or which denies a relativist view of truth, was, for me, of doubtful value.

We need rigour and agreed principles of scientific enquiry but we also need flexibility in design to suit the particular needs of early childhood educational research. We need to be able to achieve a justified believability and trustworthiness in our findings and to develop a set of skills to facilitate systematic enquiry. Burgess (1985) has reviewed the qualitative/quantitative divide in research and Gage (1989) talks of the 'paradigm war'. Yet other researchers (Bryman, 1988; Giarelli 1988; Dey, 1993) have suggested that rather than counterposing qualitative and quantitative methodologies, we should use them to complement each other. Fielding et al. (1986) recognise the need for collaboration rather than competition and others show how the new computer techniques are making 'soft' data 'hard' (Siebold et al 1992; Richards et al, 1993; Dey, 1993), which may be one way of resolving a rather spurious dichotomy. David (1996) suggests that it is not the methodology but the

paradigm in which it exists, which is the dominant feature of research; that our view of the way the world is ordered leads us to look at it from a particular perspective and find a methodology which 'best fits' our philosophy rather than 'best fits' our research purpose. If, for example, we allow that there may be more than one truth it becomes difficult to adopt a positivist position. As Popkewitz says,

'To freeze events as 'independent' and 'dependent' variables is to crystallise the complex dynamics of social life and to impose a sense of stability, directionality, and necessity where such assumptions are problematic.'

Popkewitz, 1984; p.194

## **5.2 General Method**

This study was set in the qualitative paradigm but drew on both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. It was 'evaluative research' (Norris 1990) in that its purpose was to develop a methodology to evaluate the effectiveness of early childhood educators which might also lead to their professional improvement. Teacher training and competence is being subjected to political scrutiny (DfEE, 1996). Formalised inspection of staff can be a threatening process. When it is separated from supported development, it seems unlikely to bring positive change (Pascal et al 1995). Accountability, the notion that we should seek to understand and assess critically the functioning of organisations, and make this overt, has much to recommend it. However, the supposition that inspection, accountability and an inappropriate dependence on market forces offers a means of quality assurance should be questioned, especially for public services. The methodology for this evaluative research, therefore, needed to be accessible to practitioners, close to their work and offer them insights into their

practice. This research would thus be evaluative and developmental.

Evaluation is a form of applied research which deals with real world problems.

Robson (1993) describes it as research with a 'distinctive purpose':

'an attempt to assess the worth or value of some innovation or intervention, some service or approach'

Robson, 1993, p.171

The evaluation approach was particularly suited to the needs of the research because it was dealing with real issues and seeking to assist in improving what was being assessed. Patton (1982) considers

the practice of evaluation involves the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics and outcomes of programmes, personnel and products for use by specific people to reduce uncertainties, improve effectiveness, and make decisions with regard to what those programs personnel or products are doing and affecting.'

Patton, 1982, p.15

My study, then, was a multiple method, multiple-case, evaluative study. It was aimed, not at gathering a 'sample' of cases from which generalisations could be made but, as Yin (1989) indicates, more as an attempt to replicate and improve an experimental design. The purpose was not to create statistical generalisation, although some of that might be possible, but to create appropriate analytical generalisations.

As a study which focused predominantly on qualitative methodology, inductive analysis and naturalistic enquiry, it could be said to be illuminative evaluation (House, 1978). Qualitative methods tended to be used because of their perceived sensitivity, flexibility and adaptability. The following characteristics

might be seen as examples of these qualitative methods;

- inductive analysis was preferred over deductive as it made it easier to give fuller descriptions of settings and bring out interactions,
- the sampling was purposive rather than random or matched as it increased the range of data exposed,
- theory emerged from, and was grounded in, the data,
- the design unfolded from the interaction within the study,
- meanings and interpretations were often negotiated and agreed with participants,
- the case study mode was preferred because of its adaptability,
- the study was naturalistic in the sense that it was carried out in the natural setting,
- human instruments were used in that the inquirers and others were often the primary data gathering medium,
- tacit knowledge, intuitive and felt, was used as a legitimate addition to other kinds of knowledge

Robson, 1993

This approach was particularly suited to my research objectives because the nature of the study was innovative, seeking to discover what constituted effectiveness in early childhood educators, seeking to discover theirs, and others', perceptions of their role and motivations, and to evolve a model for development. Thus it had to be real world, fine grained, accessible and meaningful to the participants giving richness of data rather than quantity. The innovative theoretical model of evaluation, and the concept of engagement, meant that a different methodology of data collection was needed to allow evidence to emerge and to capture its nature. The use of computer software driven qualitative data analysis, specifically, the Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorising programme (NUD-IST), allowed for the possibility of 'much larger multiple-case sampling giving extra confidence to findings' (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The difficulties with multiple case

studies, heretofore, has been that when cases have become greater than about  $n=20$ , they either become unwieldy or the data becomes too thin. NUD-IST allows these problems to be overcome.

### **5.3 Practitioner - Researcher Relationships**

The self contained scientifically controlled model of western positivist empirical study is restricted in its ability to perceive and understand social and cultural assumptions, values and mores outside its practitioners' own traditions and orientations'

Pence and McCallum (p120 /121)

One way in which my research sought to overcome this potential handicap was to bring it much closer to practice by involving practitioners in the process of data collection. Allen-Meares and Lane (1990) argue that there is potential synergy between research and practice and that integration can be of benefit to both. Practitioners are becoming more involved with research and Robson (1993) talks of the need for social scientists to 'give away' their findings, skills, experience, theories and methodologies if they wish to impact on society. Schon (1983) talks of the 'reflective professional' and argues that there is an increasing acceptance that investigation, enquiry, evaluation and innovation are part of the extended professionalism of practitioners. Robson (1993) notes, too, that there is an increasing move towards professional foci in educational research. Hargreaves (1996) has suggested that 'the £50-60 million we spend on educational research is poor value for money in terms of improving the quality of education provided' (p.1) Hargreaves (1996) contrasts the medical profession with the teaching profession in their use of applied research undertaken by those he sees as best placed to do it, the practitioners themselves. He calls for teaching to become a research-based profession and for research to be closely related to policy and practice. I would like to think that

my study has been an example of this. Practitioners have been closely involved with the formulation of the evaluative strategy used and are the main collectors of the data. They were asked for critical feedback at every stage of the process and about the relevance and usefulness of the evaluative strategies to their practice.

It was also important that the practitioner/researchers had some personal reward for their efforts. This was particularly true for the many early childhood workers who had no formal qualifications. Their own need for accredited professional development were matched with their setting's needs for informed improvement and the researcher's need for systematic and rigorous data collection. All participant researchers in this investigation were able to register for accreditation under the Oxford Delegacy scheme. The notion of 'professional well-being' is a crucial part of the conceptualisation of the research (q.v.Chapter 4) and the need for acknowledgement and recognition feature widely in the practitioner's evidence in questionnaires, as we shall see later.

Zeisel (1981) suggests that

'research seen as problem- and situation-specific becomes a tool to achieve someone's purposes rather than an end in itself'

Zeisel (1981) p.226

For the practitioner, the setting, and the setting's providing authority, there were clear rewards in terms of development and evaluation and the kudos of taking part in a major national study. For the Project itself there were financial advantages in being able to involve more settings and being able to use the providing authorities normal inspecting body as external support and validators of the data collecting.

The trialling of EEL Project strategies in the first phase during 1994-5 had involved the Worcester based team in direct interactions in the 13 chosen settings. This inquiry, which formed part of Phase 2 of the Project, involved 115 settings of which 169 adults provide the data for this study. The collection of the data was predominantly done by the key practitioners who researched their own settings using the methodology I had shared with them. My role was to design and modify the data collection process, train the practitioners in the research methodology, support them during the data gathering process and then to collate and analyse the data. The concept of 'Engagement' and its measurement were my particular responsibility within the EEL Project as a whole and formed the major part of my input into the training.

The key workers in the settings were trained, in cohorts of 25 or less, in a range of evaluative and observational techniques over a three day period. On the first day of the training the manager of their setting was present, so that the practitioner-researchers had the acknowledgement of the management of the settings. The practitioner researchers thus always had support and understanding within their settings.

Every key worker was also supported from outside the setting. A small local network group of colleagues, usually no more than five in number would meet regularly to discuss the issues and difficulties arising from their research. Every key worker had access to a support worker who was usually an local authority adviser, inspector or a PLA field worker. The support worker attended the twice termly network group meetings and visited every setting at least twice taking part in the observations. The number of settings under the responsibility of a

support worker varied in range from two to fifteen. The mean was 5. Every key worker and every support worker had attended the three days training and received a video and manual. The manual contained all of the evaluative tools with which to collect the data. Thus, although the research assessment of their setting was essentially self evaluatory, it had elements of external validation which strengthened its design.

#### **5.4 Participant Observation**

The social world involves subjective meanings and experiences constructed by participants in social situations. Schutz (1967) claimed that the task of interpretation in the social world is best achieved through participation with those involved. Robson (1993) suggests that by paying

particular attention to reliability, validity and objectivity, participant observation, along with other essentially qualitative techniques can be 'good science'.

Robson, 1993, p.195

Participant observation by practitioner researchers in their own settings required that they are adequately trained , have a clear idea of what is required of them, avoid bias and have support over time. It would be my contention that the research fulfilled these criteria.

There are disadvantages in using practitioner researchers rather than 'outsider' researchers. The main disadvantage is probably creating time to do systematic enquiry on top of normal commitments (Robson, 1993). This was discussed at the initial training sessions where commitment to make research time available for the practitioners was obtained from the managers of the setting. In addition,



great emphasis was placed on 'democratising' the data collection process to involve as many people of the other participants in the setting as possible. Not only would this reduce the time commitment needed by individuals but it would help in achieving 'triangulation' (Denzin, 1989). Furthermore, during the previous year's trialling, great emphasis was placed on attempting to reduce the workload on researcher practitioners by ensuring that the observational data, in particular, could be collected during the normal activity of the day. Observations were thus mainly limited to 2 minute periods. Observation is in any case a recognised element of good practice in early childhood settings and easily combined with recording (Isaacs, 1933). Timed observations of adults were sometimes difficult because, generally, it was not part of the normal activity of early childhood workers. Many early childhood settings have more than one adult present, so it was often possible, after the training was disseminated to the staff by the practitioner researcher, to have paired groups of adults observing each other, again for limited timed periods. In this way the time for observations could be managed during normal practice.

Robson (1993) suggests that as well as the problems of time for practitioner researchers, lack of expertise is an issue. Again, through the introduction of a comprehensive three day training programme, supported by an explicit and accessible step by step manual/video and the local network of regular support, I felt that the research had attempted to reduce the problems in this area. Another of Robson's (1993) concerns is that practitioner researchers might 'lack confidence because of their lack of experience' (p.447) and that 'insiders' may have preconceptions about issues and their solutions which would effect data. There may also be hierarchy difficulties, both ways with high and low status

practitioner researchers observing each other. Our attempt to democratise the data collection process would, we feel, have gone some way to alleviate this. The views of participants were sought and learning about the views of others was clearly part of the intention.

Robson (1993) also lists the advantages of using practitioner researchers. The pre-existing knowledge of the 'insider' and the experience base about the situation and the people involved allow a richness in understanding context denied to the 'outsider'. There is also likely to be substantial reduction of implementation problems. Practitioner insights can help in the design, carrying out and analysis of a study. They can make research useful and appropriate. This was certainly true of the methodology for this study which was altered and improved in the light of practitioner feedback when the methodology was being developed. Indeed, during the initial phase of the work, I put myself into the situation of being practitioner researcher. This not only gave me credibility in the eyes of the setting practitioners but also gave me insights into the actualities of collecting data in that role. This blurring of the roles between research and practice is something I feel should be celebrated. Winter (1989) commenting on practitioner research suggests that methods need to be

'accessible', in that they must be readily available to anyone who seeks to adopt them, and 'rigorous', that is, that they are systematically grounded in justifiable and consistent principles

Winter, 1989 p.36.

Robson (1993) argues that,

the methods of systematic real world enquiry are not a private garden to which only the graduate of psychology has access

Robson, 1993 p.449

He acknowledges that time and effort is certainly needed by the practitioner to enter this collaborative research process but that this can be facilitated by a sympathetic and experienced adviser and consultant. This role was fulfilled in this study by myself and the external support worker attached to the setting. Every effort was made to demistify the research, an aim which was not in conflict with the need to avoid compromising its rigour. Practitioner involvement fosters the attitude amongst settings that the way to deal with issues is to approach them as a systematic enquiry. Not only is that an attitude which will benefit the setting and the practitioner but it will also, in the long term, create a climate in which research is seen to be meaningful for practitioners.

### **5.5 The Research Population**

The research population was not a precisely matched or balanced cohort. Major providers of early childhood provision were selected on the basis of geographical range, that is, they were spread throughout the United Kingdom and represented rural and urban communities (see figure15 overleaf). Providers were approached and agreed to participate and to part fund their participation by, for example, providing a venue for the training and by arranging the release of, and cover for, the practitioners. Different kinds of providers were recruited to ensure a range of different kinds of provision and 3 LEA providers were also prepared to involve settings outside their statutory obligation, i.e. social services day nurseries and voluntary sector playgroups, in an attempt to stimulate integration of services. The settings could be LEA nursery schools, LEA nursery classes, Social Services day nurseries, reception classes, Primary schools, family centres, playgroups, private nurseries, early childhood centres or indeed any of the 29 different kinds of centre based

provision that Clark (1986) identifies as available in the UK.

**Figure 15: Range of Major Providers, (n = 8)**

A Midlands Metropolitan Local Education Authority (LEA)
A South Coast LEA
The Preschool Learning Alliance (PLA) Northern Region & PLA Southern Region
The Northern Ireland Education and Library Boards and Northern Ireland PPA (NIPPA)
A Welsh LEA
A Scottish LEA
A Private Company Provider

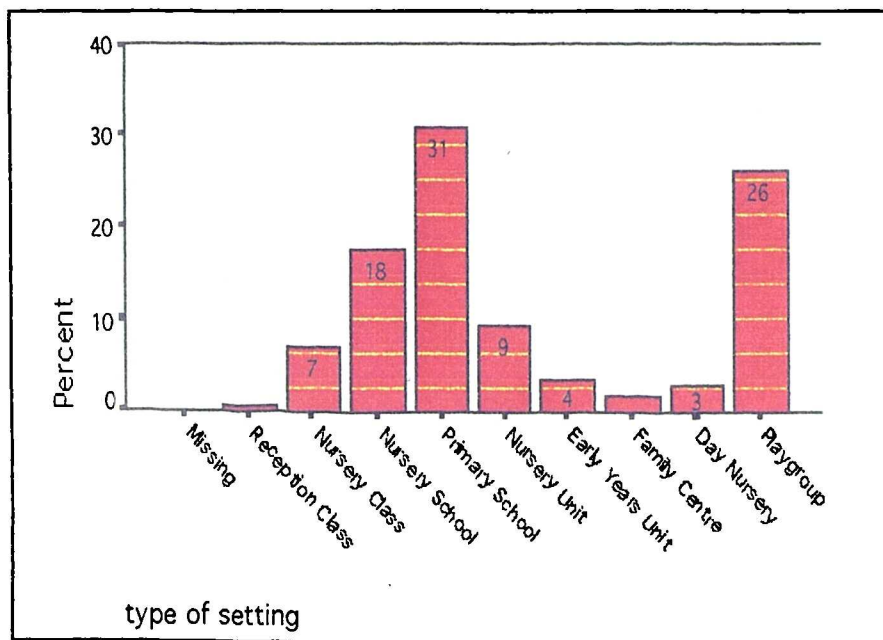
Figure 16, overleaf, shows the percentage of settings in Phase 2 by type, as described by the setting, n = 115. For ease of calculation some amalgamation of setting types was necessary: for example, settings who described themselves as 'Primary Schools' were subsumed under the 'Reception Class' in later calculations as all children in such schools were four years old.

Figure17, overleaf, shows the percentage of settings in Phase 2 by type within each of the 8 regional providers, n = 115.

Selection of the settings themselves was left to the providers with three stipulations:

1. the selected settings should be volunteers and be open

**Figure 16: Types of Settings as a Percentage of the Total**

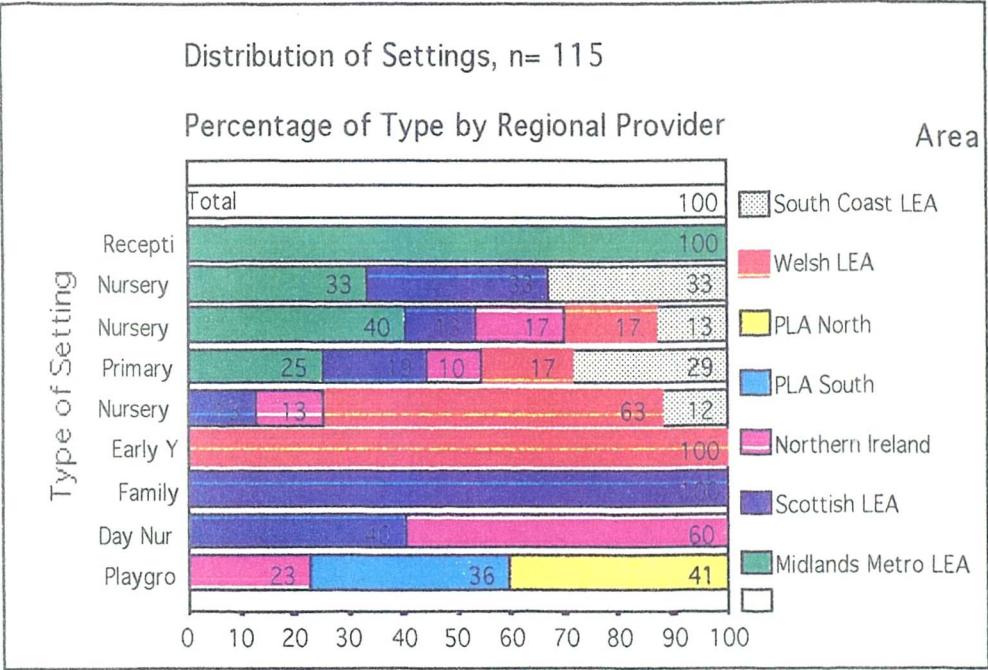


- development,
- 2. they should not be exceptional but broadly representational,
- 3. there should be no more than 25 settings in any single cohort.

Following an evening presentation, open to all practitioners who were interested and at which I explained the evaluation and development process and the nature and degree of their commitment if they wished to participate, there were always more volunteers than places available, so settings were chosen against criteria established by the providers. These differed between providers. The metropolitan authority wanted to ensure that there was geographical representation (inner and outer ring wards), and used ethnicity and social economic background to obtain a spread. Some providers wanted to obtain a balance between those who were strong and articulate practitioners, who they intended to use, later, for further dissemination of the process, and those who, they felt, needed to be given insights and support. Some providers wanted to use the EEL Project

given insights and support. Some providers wanted to use the EEL Project as a focus for integrated inservice for different types of setting to allow differing sectors to have a common focus for collaboration. The cohort was thus not a random sample nor was it a matched sample but a broadly representational sample containing a variety of different types of settings from a variety of different backgrounds with a range of practitioner ability. A decision, on practical grounds of cost and accessibility, was taken only to involve early childhood education settings that were centre-based.

**Figure 17: Phase 2 Settings by Type and as a Percentage of Each Region's Provision**



integrated inservice for different types of setting to allow differing sectors to have a common focus for collaboration. The cohort was thus not a random sample nor was it a matched sample but a broadly representational sample containing a variety of different types of settings from a variety of different backgrounds with a range of practitioner ability. A decision, on practical grounds of cost and accessibility, was taken only

to involve early childhood education settings that were centre-based. This was also a stipulation of the original grant awarding body for the EEL Research Project.

### **5.6 Specific Procedures/Research Process**

The data for this study was collected by the key worker in each a setting following her three days of initial training. It took the form of 'Action Research' (Lewin,1946) aiming,

to contribute both to practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable framework

Rapoport, 1970, p.1.

The process of quality evaluation and development took nine to twelve months and was conceptualised as a four stage process similar to the 'change through democratic problem solving' model of Goodlad (1975). Popkewitz (1984) has been critical of this approach:

The belief that school staffs can identify and plan to alter their own assumptions and power arrangements through a focus on process seems to belie experience. Schools are complex social contexts. There is little time for critical reflection. Their social and political values are often anti-intellectual, anti-democratic and anti-educational. These values are built into the way curriculum is defined, the social organisation of classrooms, and the administrative theories of schooling. Because of the implicit quality of these values, they are psychologically compelling to participants and the publics of schooling. To consider change as process without form is to lose sight of the substance that underlies reform and to conserve what is to be changed.'

Popkewitz, 1984, p.146

I felt the the research was able to address these criticisms in a number of ways.

Firstly, the practitioners were given substantial training in data collecting techniques. Secondly, these techniques were specifically designed to keep time requirements minimal. Thirdly, the explicit manual and the video cameos of observations of the adults and children used in the training were introduced by the key worker to the rest of her colleagues in the setting. This allowed other staff to become involved in the data collection. This reduced the time any one person had to give to the research and at the same time democratised the process of collection by involving more people. Fourthly, this democratisation was extended to include data supplied by others beyond the staffroom, so that the values, attitudes and beliefs of governors, parents and children were included. In this way the research process was both practical and scientifically rigorous. Finally, the external support worker was able, during a minimum of two visits to each of the settings and at the twice termly, network meetings, to provide some external monitoring of the process over the nine months of the research cycle.

During Stage One of the cycle (see Figure 18, overleaf), the Evaluation Phase, the Keyworker and her fellow practitioners work together, and with parents, children, other workers and managers, to document and evaluate the quality of early learning within the setting. They do this using the ten dimensions of quality outlined in the 'Pascal/Bertram Quality Evaluation Framework' (1993) described in Chapter 3. Examples of evaluative questions are detailed in the table, which follows the model of Quality Development and Evaluation Cycle, over leaf (Pascal and Bertram, 1994b). A range of different methods of collecting data are used in this initial stage but, the process begins with a Letter of Agreement which is



**Figure 18: The model of Quality Evaluation and Development**

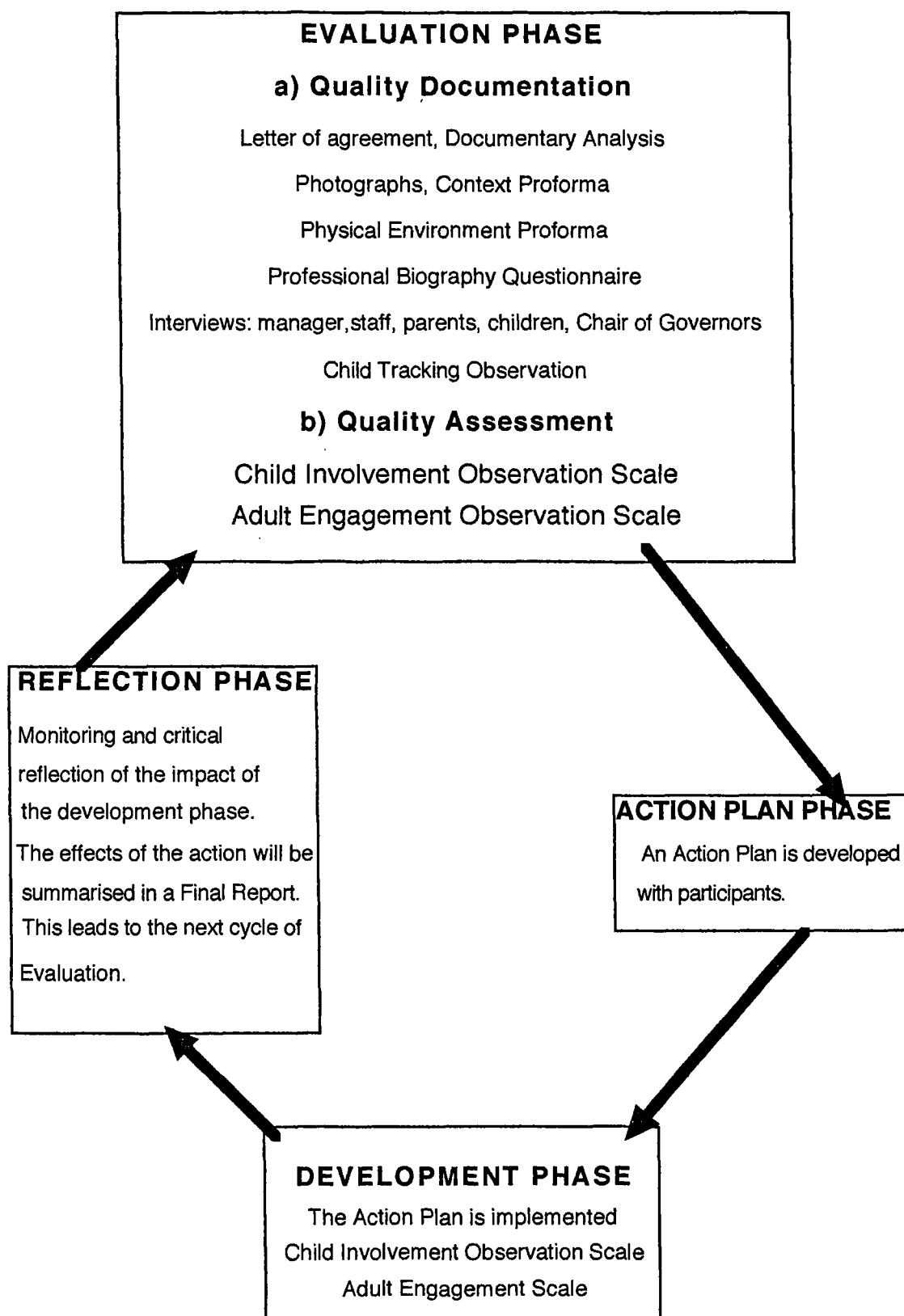


TABLE 1: TEN DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY

DIMENSION	EXAMPLES OF RESEARCH QUESTION
1. Aims and objectives	<p>Who formulates policy?  How is policy formulated?  What are the aims and objectives?  How are these communicated?  What is their rationale?  How far are they shared between practitioners, parents and children?</p> <p>SEN  <i>What policy is there on integration of children with SEN?</i>  <i>What are the aims of including children with SEN in this setting?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>to develop the whole child?</i></li> <li>• <i>to provide a venue for therapists to come in and work with child?</i></li> <li>• <i>to allow child to mix with children without SEN?</i></li> <li>• <i>to provide opportunity for child to work on problem areas in a safe setting?</i></li> <li>• <i>to provide taste of mainstream/large classes because child is likely to go onto mainstream full-time?</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Does the setting include children with sensory impairment, language impairment, physical disability, developmental delay, gifted children, emotional/behavioural difficulties?</i></p>
2. Learning experiences/ Curriculum	<p>What does the curriculum contain?  What range of experiences does the curriculum offer?  What is the breadth and balance of the curriculum?  How is it differentiated?  How are continuity and progression achieved?</p> <p>SEN  <i>Is the curriculum modified or enriched to aid the development of children with SEN?</i>  <i>Does it include activities which will allow children to develop particular skills which have been identified by therapists?</i></p>
3. Teaching and learning strategies	<p>How are children learning?  How much child-initiated talk is there?  What opportunities for dialogue are there?  What play opportunities are there?  Who participates in the play?  What is the teaching style?  How is the programme organised?  How is learning managed?  What role do the adults take?  What rules operate and who sets them?</p> <p>SEN  <i>How do staff manage the balance between autonomy and supportive intervention?</i></p>

TEN DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY	
DIMENSION	EXAMPLES OF RESEARCH QUESTION
4. Planning, assessment and record keeping	<p>How is learning planned?  How is learning assessed?  How is learning recorded?  Who is involved in these processes?  How do these processes link into each other?</p> <p>SEN  <i>Identification of children with SEN. What mechanisms are in place to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>document practitioner's first concern over development of a child in their setting, and the discussion of this concern with the child's carers?</i></li> <li>• <i>gather written evidence about the extent and nature of this concern, as a result of observations from different activities in setting, and comments from parents about relevant behaviour at home?</i></li> <li>• <i>contact appropriate experts, voluntary agencies and support services, when able to articulate concern clearly and support with evidence/instances of difficulty?</i></li> <li>• <i>design action plans to promote child's development in all areas, including the area where the difficulty seems to lie?</i></li> <li>• <i>organise regular but informal reviews of child's progress and results of liaison with outside experts?</i></li> </ul>
5. Staffing	<p>What are the staffing levels?  What are the training qualification, and experience of the staff?  How are the staff deployed?  How is staff development achieved?  What role/function do staff perform?</p> <p>SEN  <i>What provision is there for training for teaching and non-teaching staff?</i>  <i>How are staff deployed?</i>  <i>How are children grouped?</i>  <i>Are children with SEN integrated in group activities?</i></p>
6. Physical environment	<p>What kind of building do they operate in?  How much space is there?  How is it utilised?  What facilities are there?  What resources and equipment are available?  What condition are they in?  How are they used?</p> <p>SEN  <i>Is the building suitable for a full range of children with SEN? including where appropriate:</i>  <i>wheel chair access; edges of steps painted white; range of quiet and noisy areas; space to run and let off steam; clear boundaries of where children can and cannot go, without need for complex rules and prohibitions; good facilities for discreet toileting and changing.</i>  <i>Do resources (books, audio-and video tapes, TV/radio programmes and stories told) reflect a culture of equal opportunities for children with SEN?</i></p>

TEN DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY	
DIMENSION	EXAMPLES OF RESEARCH QUESTION
7. Relationships and interaction	<p>What is the level and style of interaction?  What are the relationships and how are they established?  How are individuals catered for?  How much involvement is there?  What codes of conduct operate?</p> <p>SEN  <i>How does the setting ensure that any children with SEN are truly integrated and not just spending time in the same room as the other children?</i>  <i>Are children with SEN expected to obey rules/conform to class practices?</i></p>
8. Equal opportunities	<p>What policy is there on equal opportunity issues?  How are issues of gender addressed?  How do staff and children deal with race?  How are the needs of children with disabilities identified and met?  How are stereotypes challenged?  In what ways does the environment reflect cultural and social diversity?  What resources are available?</p> <p>SEN  <i>What provision is there for explaining children's programmes with parents for whom English is a second language?</i>  <i>Are there opportunities for boys and girls with SEN to play with other children of both genders?</i></p>
9. Parental partnership, home and community liaison	<p>What is the policy on parental partnership?  How are parents involved in learning?  How is liaison and co-ordination between settings achieved?  How do the learning activities reflect an awareness of the home and community environment?  Does the setting offer any means of family support?</p> <p>SEN  <i>How are parents kept informed of their child's day (and setting of the child's home activities?)</i>  <i>How are parents involved in ongoing assessment and supportive intervention?</i>  <i>Are there frequent visits from adults and children (all ages) with disabilities to the setting and reciprocal visits to special schools and units, or to individuals in their own homes?</i>  <i>Are there opportunities for parents to share experiences of bringing up children (with and without SEN)?</i></p>
10. Monitoring and evaluation	<p>What procedures are there for quality control?  What strategies are there for monitoring and evaluation?  How often are they implemented?  Who is involved?</p> <p>SEN  <i>How do you gain access to SEN experts to help in appraisal?</i></p>
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signed jointly by the setting manager and the Research Director and which sets out the commitment expected from each side. This makes clear what the research is intending to do and addresses issues of confidentiality. I will explore this later in the section on ethical considerations at the end of this chapter.

It is important to clarify, here, that my research was focused on a particular aspect of the larger project and that, though I had access to all the data collected by the participant researchers, my particular interest in the adult educator meant that I was focused on some data and less so on others. In the interest of completeness, I will set out all the research process and the various forms of data collection, because all the data influenced my conceptualisation of the issues to some extent. Later, I will discuss in more detail the particular items that were specific to my study.

My first intention in the 'Evaluation Phase' (see Fig. 18) was to enable the practitioner researcher to document the quality of her setting (quality documentation). She did this following the step by step process set out in the manual (Pascal, Bertram et al., 1994). First a 'context proforma' was completed. This was a fairly closed form of questionnaire which was addressed by the Manager and the researcher practitioner working together and which aimed to collect basic contextual information about the setting. This relatively straightforward exercise was chosen as the initial task to draw the participants into the research and was an easily achievable first goal.

Next a documentary analysis was proposed. This involved an analysis of the written documentation in each setting. It included policy statements, parent prospectus, governors' reports, curriculum guidelines and such like. During the

initial three days of training the practitioner researcher had been given a series of techniques for extracting information from documentation. Here, she was being asked to extract from the documents she gathered, the stated policy, aims and objectives of the setting and also any information relevant to the ten dimensions. Later, using other techniques such as direct observation, they would be able to judge whether these aims were met by their setting; that is whether the reality matched the rhetoric. It is important here to emphasise that although the ten dimensions themselves are necessarily based on a value system (albeit of a long tradition; Bruce 1987), we were allowing the setting to assert through their documentation what they were intending to achieve and then to lead them later to see how far that was realised. To that extent we were not imposing a 'top-down', 'insider-outsider' model of quality (Katz,1995) but encouraging the settings themselves to make informed judgments in a rigorous and systematic way.

The next step in the Evaluation Phase involved another proforma which consisted of a series of closed questions and checklists which collected information regarding the physical environment of the setting, indoors and outdoors. Photographs were also taken at this stage which would later be used in the interviews with the children and as illustration in the Evaluative Report.

All adults, paid and unpaid, who are working with three and four year old children in the setting are then asked to complete a questionnaire on their 'Professional Biography'. This is a relatively short questionnaire which asks for details on training, qualifications and experience of those who work in the setting. It also asks more open questions about opportunities for professional

development and about their career aspirations. As the analysis of this data forms a substantial strand of my research, I shall return to it in greater detail later.

Next, a series of focused structured interviews involving the Manager, a sample of the staff up to a maximum of 5, a sample of the parents (maximum 5), a sample of children (maximum 5) and the Chair of the managing body are conducted using a detailed prompt schedule. Again, the coded information from these interviews, particularly those involving the staff, provides another strand of information on the adults in the setting highly relevant to the present study.

The final technique of the quality documentation element of the Evaluation Phase is the use of targeted child tracking observations for a sample of the children.

In addition to this rich, varied, detailed and predominantly qualitative data, the second aim of the Evaluation Phase (see Figure 18) involved 'Quality Assessment' providing more quantitative data. Focusing on the process variable discussed in Chapter 4, the two observation scales Child Involvement and Adult Engagement were used. The first assessed the children's deep level involvement in their learning by observing the physical signals they give and the second assessed the adults' educative interaction with the children.

Using the data obtained from the quality documentation and the quality assessment procedures, the practitioner researcher collates and synthesises her findings into a detailed and carefully structured written Evaluation Report.

This Evaluation Report is an agreed picture of the quality of educational experience for 3 and 4 year old children as revealed by the evaluative process. It takes the form of text, photographs, tables and graphs and is without value judgments. The text is structured by questions that require descriptive answers. A guide is given to the practitioner researcher to help her locate where the evidence for her answers will be (see Appendix, i.)

The second phase of the Quality Evaluation and Development Model (see Fig.18) is the Action Plan Phase. The external support worker, the practitioner researcher and the other staff, having read and agreed the Evaluation Report, come together to celebrate the achievements and strengths of the setting and identify areas for development. All the staff are encouraged to voice areas which they would like to see addressed and these are noted, synthesised and prioritised. The key role of the researcher practitioner and the manager as 'change agents' is important, here. Also important is the role of the external support worker in helping the setting to identify sources of expertise, identify resources or further training and support structures. The Action Plan that emerges is based on a proforma in the Manual which sets out clearly articulated objectives, structured and achievable within a stated time scale and impact measures, which identify when objectives have been achieved. The roles and responsibilities of each member of staff in achieving this is also delineated (see Appendix ii.).

The next phase is the Development stage (see Fig.18) when the Action Plan is implemented. This entails a programme of monitored individual and institutional development which relates closely to the agreed priorities. All the participants are encouraged to gather evidence of the effectiveness of the action on the



learning experiences of the children in the setting. Often this will be closely related to the previously identified 'impact measures'. At the end of this stage, the two observations scales, adult 'Engagement' and child 'Involvement', are reapplied as post test, quality assessment tools, to see if there are measurable changes in the quality of learning experiences. It is recommended that the external support worker shares this second round of observations to give greater objective strength to the judgments.

The final stage of the cycle (see Fig.18) is the Reflective Phase when the practitioner researcher is encouraged to reflect on the Evaluation and Development process and to review her evidence for its impact on the setting. She draws together her findings in a Final Report, which again is found as a proforma to be completed in the Manual (see Appendix iii.). This final report includes comparisons between the two rounds of observations and the staff's views on further development. This then leads back into a further cycle of evaluation and development.

### **5.7 Issues of Reliability and Validity**

Establishing the trustworthiness of an enquiry based predominantly on qualitative data might be seen by some as problematic. My viewpoint is that in a multi method approach it should not be thought that qualitative data are, in some way, more doubtful than quantitative data, nor should it be assumed that they are secondary or subservient. To make this claim, however, it is necessary that the qualitative data, in methodological approach and in analysis, are rigorous and systematic. Anthropologists, such as Wax et al. (1971), talk of the need to address the issues of 'representativeness', 'availability' and 'weighting'

in human studies. There is a tendency to over rely on accessible informants, who may be unrepresentative, on accessible events or looking for what fits the picture and ignoring the detail that does not. This 'holistic bias' can mean that due weight is not accorded to that which does not fit the general pattern. My study clearly needed to look for and establish patterns but, as we shall see later, the computer software allowed detail and dissenting voices into the analysis, too. The fact that there were a relatively large number of multiple case studies, geographical spread and broadly representational in the diversity of their type also addressed this issue of 'representativeness'. The settings chose themselves, in that they were volunteers. Where choice of participation was initially made by the major providers it was done, on my request, against criteria which were specified to make them unexceptional. As I suggested earlier when discussing the research population, the settings within any one provider were broadly representational and the providers themselves were selected to be broadly representational.

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.290) suggest four key questions which underpin systematic enquiry into human behaviour:

- 1 Truth value; how is confidence in the 'truth' of the findings established?
- 2 Applicability; how specific to their particular context are these findings?
- 3 Consistency; can the findings be replicated?
- 4 Neutrality; what contamination occurs from the biases, motivations, interests or perspectives of the enquirer?

These four questions underpinned my approach to issues of validity and reliability.

### **5.7.1 Alternatives to Validity and Reliability**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) maintain that concepts of 'internal and external validity', 'reliability' and 'objectivity' are inappropriate to qualitative enquiry. They propose four different criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

#### **5.7.1.1 Credibility**

Credibility examines whether the subject of the enquiry has been accurately identified and described. It is analogous to internal validity in quantitative analysis. Campbell and Stanley (1963) suggest that case study stands up well in comparison with the quasi-experimental approaches of positivism on the issue of internal validity. Statistical regression does not apply and maturation issues will depend on the relative duration of the study (Robson, 1993). In my enquiry, the trialling and development of the research materials has taken five years and is still ongoing and has involved over 2,400 practitioners to date. Minimally, contact with each of the settings lasted for twelve months from the initial training to the end of the first cycle of evaluation and development.

Instrumentation can be problematic for case studies but Guba and Lincoln (1985) suggest five ways in which the credibility of qualitative data can be improved.

1. Prolonged involvement allows time for a culture to be learnt and for misinformation to be tested. Case studies by their nature, of course, demand prolonged involvement. In this study, the closeness of the practitioner researcher to her colleagues and her situation as a participant within the setting ensured involvement over time.

2. Persistent observation is another means of enhancing the credibility by

bringing depth. Sylva et al. (1980) suggest that about 100 hours of observation are necessary to describe interactions in an early childhood setting. The three observation measures in my study, the Child Involvement Scale, the Adult Engagement Scale and the Child Tracking Observations, provided a minimum of 120 hours of observation in the setting and usually considerably more. Just by using the data collected through observation as a measure, it can be seen that persistence was a characteristic of my study. That the full cycle of evaluation and development might last 12 months ensured that this was not a quick 'dipstick' measurement.

3. Peer debriefing is a means of exposing one's data, analysis and conclusions to colleagues continually to assist in the development of both design and analysis. In my project this occurred constantly and at a number of levels. Firstly, I was able to share with, refine detail and obtain critical assessment from other members of the research team, the steering group and other researchers working in the field in this country and abroad (Bertram and Pascal, 1993, 1994, 1995), ideas about developments and hypotheses as they emerged. Secondly, I was able to continually feed back to large groups of practitioners what I was doing and what seemed to be happening in settings with whom we had already worked. The manual and the training process were continually being updated, too, by feedback coming the other way from the settings to me. Thirdly, the design of the research involved the network meetings of research practitioners in meetings with their peers and their external support worker (advisor or inspector) where they critically assessed what they were doing and fed back specific issues to me. Finally, within the setting, staff development time was made available to discuss the process of the research and examine data emerging. The initial Evaluation Report was

circulated to all staff in a setting before its final draft for their comments and adjustments could be made in the light of peer comments. A similar process of peer collegiality accompanied the Action Plan and the Final Report. This explicitness and openness with peer groups fosters credibility. Robson (1993) says,

member checks, checking with those from whom the data are derived get to the heart of credibility'

Robson, 1993, p.404.

4. Triangulation, that is the use of data from different sources, collected by different investigators and with differing methodology are all hallmarks of this research as we have already indicated. Triangulation techniques such as these enhance credibility.

#### **5.7.1.2 Transferability**

Transferability within the qualitative paradigm refers to external validity or generalisability in conventional quantitative research. My study did not seek to establish a controlled sample population but it did nevertheless have a broadly representative range of types of provision. The findings about one kind of setting should be sufficiently similar to those that might be found in a similar type of setting. Geertz (1973) suggests that when descriptions of cases are sufficiently 'thick', judgments about transferability are possible. Denzin (1978) explains that,

'thick description includes information about the context of an act, the intentions and the meanings that organise action, and

its subsequent evolution'

Denzin, 1978, p.331.

I would hope to substantiate by reference to the variety of methodologies, the triangulation, the detailed observations, questionnaires and structured interviews, the documentary analysis and such like that my research does, indeed, produce 'thick' or thorough description of each case setting. Further, Marshall and Rossman (1989) stress that transferability is enhanced by the full specification of a theoretical framework. The Framework of Effectiveness that I have already explored in chapters 3 & 4 will allow for a generalisation of the findings.

#### **5.7.1.3 Dependability**

Dependability is the equivalent of reliability. Just as reliability can be seen as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for validity, so dependability is necessary but not sufficient for credibility. Clearly, triangulation is important to dependability but Guba and Lincoln (1985) suggest that an 'enquiry audit' is also a means of establishing it. Just as an auditor will check financial management, process and statement, so an academic auditor can check that processes are clear, systematic, well documented and provide safeguards against bias. This constitutes a dependability test. The use of a group of researchers, debating and examining the issues in the larger EEL Project can be seen as perusing auditors, as can, indeed, the research colleagues from across the world, with whom I have shared this developing process at symposia and conferences. More pragmatically, every major provider who has taken part in this study has had to make a financial contribution and this during a period of

great financial stringency. Their initial examination of the process, and continuing commitment to it, has been very much an audit and several have built evaluation of the research formally into their participation. The involvement of more than 40 major providers to date, and the sheer number of participants from the UK and from overseas, working in an open, collaborative process, suggests that the evaluative research is a credible and dependable process.

#### **5.7.1.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability corresponds to the concept of objectivity. Do the findings flow from the data? Has the research process been adequate? Is there bias in interpretation? Halpern (1983) suggests that a test of confirmability might be whether an 'audit trail' is available for scrutiny. If someone conducting an 'audit enquiry' is able to follow that trail (the process of the data collection), then judgments about its trustworthiness can be made. If the trail is comprehensive, useful and linked to the purposes of the study, then those judgments about the objectivity of the research are strong. Following the initial trialling and pilot study during Phase 1 (1994-5), the manual of the evaluative process set out in a very clear and accessible way, the methodology of the research. The network groups of practitioners were asked continually by the support workers about their evaluation of the process in which they were participating, its usefulness and its comprehensiveness. This was fed back to me and allowed me to make judgments about the participants views on its thoroughness and usefulness. In addition to this, every setting was contacted individually and asked to return an evaluative questionnaire after they had completed the process. This questionnaire (see appendix, iv.) asked questions specifically about effectiveness, thoroughness, fairness, impact and the settings continuing

commitment to the cyclical process. Two of the major providers also did independent audits of the process. From these sources I was able to confirm that the participants and the funding providers felt the process had been beneficial, successful and had been viewed as objective, rigorous and systematic.

### **5.8 Quantitative Measures**

There were several aspects of the study which were suited to quantitative analysis but these were used at a secondary level to back up the qualitative analysis not as data to stand in isolation. The main quantitative elements that have applicability to my study are the data from the two observation scales, Child Involvement and Adult Engagement during the second phase of the Project. Both these scales were used by practitioners within their settings to make judgments about their children and about the quality of their colleagues educational interaction with the children. The issue of researcher reliability, or consistency over time, needed to be addressed and also the complementary issue of inter-observer agreement, whether different observers would make similar judgments. A single observer can be idiosyncratic in her observations but may be consistent over time. To address these two issues, of consistency over time and between researchers, a series of checks were built into the process. Firstly, the participant researchers were given a blind test on the last day of the training sessions. This consisted of five video cameos, of 2 minutes length each. There were two sets of video clips; one for Child Involvement and one for Adult Engagement. They contained a randomly sequenced mix of the levels of both scales and the participant researchers were required to rate them independently with no conferring. There were five clips for Involvement and a



further five for Engagement. The video cameos showing Children Involvement were previously rated by the core team at Worcester and the degree of agreement was measured. Although detailed statistical analysis will have to await the large mass of data accumulating in Phase 3, both scales show a relatively high degree of agreement between the observers. Specifically, more than 90% of all the rated observations for any particular cameo were covered by 2 levels on the scale and were within one level of the level of the rating given the cameo by the core team. Thus, for example, if the core team rated an interaction at level 3, more than 90% of the observer participants would rate it as level (3 or 4). It is important here to stress again that this present study is not a quantitative study. The quantitative data is simply used in support. Phase 2, with which this study was concerned, was part of the trialling and development process, and quantitative data collection methodology was improved in Phase 3, which will allow for more numerical judgments on agreement, such as Cohen's Kappa, to be made. Other statistical confirmation on the reliability and validity of the scales comes from Laevers (1993) whose LIS-YC (Involvement) and ASOS (Engagement) scales are the derivative root of the scales in this present study (Maes & Nijsmans, 1988).

It is acknowledged that the Adult Engagement figures showed less consistency than those for Child Involvement, though this is understandable for two reasons. Firstly, early childhood educators are much less practised in observing adults and making judgments about colleagues carries more problems than observing and making judgments about children. Secondly, the Engagement Scale is much more complex being comprised of three categories with 5 levels (i.e. 15 scoring possibilities) as opposed to the single category of five levels which

characterises the Involvement Scale. Nevertheless, these figures show high levels of inter researcher reliability at the initial training.

**Figure:19: Degree of Agreement on Random Test at Training Sessions,**

**Mean Involvement Scores:**

Number of Phase 2 Providers = 8, total number of participants = 173,  
Range Levels 1-5, 5 test items.

	Actual Level	Total Mean Area Mean	Lowest Area Mean	Highest Area Mean	Standard Deviation
Fragment 1	4	4.1802	3.5333	4.4815	0.7150
Fragment 2	2	2.2093	1.875	2.4839	0.5213
Fragment 3	3	3.4535	3.2222	3.8750	0.6052
Fragment 4	1	1.3931	1.1481	2.0000	0.5969
Fragment 5	4	3.6221	3.4333	3.8750	0.6943

**Mean Engagement Scores:**

Total number of participants in test, n=152; Range, Levels 1-5

	EEI Team Rated Mean Level of 2 test items	Researcher-Practitioner Rated Mean Level at Completion of Training on 2 test items
Sensitivity	2.0000	2.8333
Stimulation	2.5000	2.2500
Autonomy	1.5000	1.4333

Consistency over time was encouraged through the involvement of the

practitioner researchers in the moderating network meetings which took place twice a term and by the involvement of the external Support Worker in the final set of observations which took place in the settings towards the end of the Development Phase. This certainly helped towards minimising 'observer drift'. Taplin and Reid (1973) monitored observers from different groups who had been told different things. The poorest performing group, in terms of reliability, were those who were told they would not be monitored. Those who were told they were going to be monitored on specific occasions did better and those who were subject to random monitoring did best. My research would place the researcher participant observers in the second category of Taplin and Reid's rating.

However, in addition to the checks already described, I decided to do a check on 25% of the sample (that is 23 settings from 7 out of 8 providers) after they had completed six months of the development cycle. I arranged for members of the core research team, who had been part of the process of developing the scales, to revisit a quarter of the participating settings to record their observations of Child Involvement and Adult Engagement to see how they equated with the aggregated scores recorded by the settings themselves. The settings were visited by two members of the team on two separate occasions to achieve approximately the same number of timed observations as had been completed by the setting in their original assessment.

The comparative figures for these mean scores are shown in Figure 20 & Figure 21 and show that agreement between setting and monitoring research team was very high for Involvement and high for Engagement.

**Figure 20: Comparison of Practitioner Rated and Research Team Rated Mean 'Involvement' Levels in Practitioners' Settings visited by Team at the end of the Development Phase.**

Number of settings visited = 23 (within 7 major providers)

(1)Experimental: (rated by Setting researcher-practitioner)

Number of valid observations recorded 1447

{ (2)Control: (rated by EEL Research Team staff )

Number of valid observations recorded 1104 }

Mean:	3.348 { 3.293 }	Std Dev	1.027 { 1.087 }
		Kurtosis	-.540 { -.782 }
		Skewness	-.198 { -.057 }

**Figure 21, Comparison of Mean 'Engagement' of Settings (1) rated by Setting and (2) rated by EEL Team visited at the end of the Development Phase**

Number of settings visited = 23 (within 7 major providers)

(1)Experimental: (rated by Setting researcher-practitioner)

Number of valid observations recorded 1443

{ (2)Control: (rated by EEL Research Team staff )

Number of valid observations recorded 820 }

Mean 'Sensitivity':	4.2520 { 3.7329 }	Std Dev	0.8875 { 1,2514 }
Mean 'Stimulation':	4.1234 { 3.5549 }	Std Dev	0.9901 {1.4570}
Mean 'Autonomy':	3.9615 { 3.1183 }	Std Dev	1.0842 {1.6639}

Agreement on Engagement rating of settings was less close between the

practitioner researcher and visiting EEL researcher than it was for Involvement. The scores of the research team appeared to follow a similar profile to that recorded by the setting practitioners but the Practitioner researchers seemed to be rating more favourably than they had during training. Broadly speaking, the differences were greatest when Autonomy was being rated, less great when Stimulation was rated and closest when Sensitivity was being considered. More solid and precise judgments will be able to be made on the qualitative data when the numbers are increased by data from Phase 3 of the EEL Project (1995-6). My research is based on 169 adults working in 115 settings; with this relatively small cohort, the quantitative data in this present study is simply used as supportive evidence to the qualitative analysis.

### **5.9 The Observation Scales**

As already discussed in Chapter 4 & 5, the evidence of learning activity was rated on a scale 5 by observation of physical signals displayed by a child during a timed period. Several observations of several children were completed during different times of the day. A picture was then built up of the mean 'involvement' for a setting by averaging the scores recorded. Using the 'Engagement' Scale to observe the adults' educative relationship with their children, it was also possible to obtain a mean engagement score for a setting for each of the three categories of engagement. The scores for individual adults were not specified on ethical grounds although paired groups of adults would know their own scores when they were observing each other. The evaluative and professional development process thus remained strong even if this was at the expenses of more rigour in the quantitative component of the study.

Robson (1993) suggests that when coding systems are used by participant

researchers they should be straight forward and reliable. He recommends seven criteria:

1. the coding should be 'focused'. Both the Child Involvement and the Adult Engagement Scales were 'focused' scales looking at carefully selected aspects of the learning and interactive process,

2. the coding should be as objective as possible. Both the scales were based on defined levels of observed behaviour,

3. the coding should be non context dependent. The scales could be applied at any time when children were learning or adults were engaging with them,

4. the coding should be explicitly defined. Detailed categories, levels and methodology were given during the training programme. In addition the video cameos gave explicit examples of appropriate scoring and the Manual was a written source of information.

5. the coding should be exhaustive. All possibilities were covered including a category for 'no evidence' when the observer did not see any evidence which would allow her to make a judgment.

6. the coding should be mutually exclusive. The categories within both scales were discrete.

7. the coding should be easy to record. The proformas for recording the data were trialled during Phase 1 and altered in the light of feedback. Tick boxes and circling were extensively used with only small sections of text

required. Each observation lasted 2 minutes so could take place within the normal practice of the practitioner researcher.

### **5.10 Characteristics of the Scales**

It is important at this stage to examine the characteristics of the two observation scales and determine their strengths and weaknesses. These scales are not psychometric, standardised tests but neither are they merely arbitrary. They both have origins in scales tested for inter-researcher reliability (Spearman 0.9) in clinical and real classroom situations (Maes & Nijsmans, 1988, Laevers 1994). Further, in their original form, they have been successfully used by trained adults other than professional researchers.

One can state that teachers possessing a fair amount of empathy are capable of handling the scales after half a day of training.

Laevers, 1995; p. 10

Two studies are important in considering the use of the scales for evaluative research and development. Firstly, Laevers (1994) was able to show that the measured quality of learning ('Involvement'), and the quality of interaction ('Engagement'), remained fairly stable characteristics of a setting over time in the absence of intervention. This demonstrates that these two concepts are substantive, and concrete characteristics of a setting which may be subject to assessment. Secondly, Theunissen et al (1992) found that measurable, positive change occurred in a setting when staff were trained in using the observation scales. This study confirms that the two observation scales provided credible and effective means of evaluation and development.

The ASOS and LIS-YC scales of Laevers (1994) were, however, both

frequency scales which looked at sequential occurrences of observed behaviour during a defined time. The Adult Engagement and the Child Involvement Scales were adaptations which allowed UK practitioners to have access to these ideas and to use them in the ordinary course of their working day. They were not based on consecutive timed frequencies but on timed interval frequency observations spread out over the course of a day and over a number of sessions. As such, they could claim to be more representative of the reality of the setting and an amalgamation of scores in a setting could be used to indicate a settings overall rating on Child Involvement and Adult Engagement.

Both the Adult Engagement scale and the Child Involvement scale are conceived as being an 'equal appearing interval scale' (Thurstone & Chave 1929). Both scales have been used with large numbers of early childhood educators who have made independent judgments in rating video cameos of interactions. Thurstone & Chave (1929) suggest between 50 - 100 'judges' are needed to establish an interval scale based on their methodology of rating attitudes; the EEL Project has involved to date more than 2000 adults working with young children. They have overwhelmingly confirmed the value of the 5 levels of the descriptors in the case of the Involvement Scale and of the value of each of the 5 points in the case of the Engagement Scale. The results of independent rating tests based on observation of 5 video cameos of 2 minutes duration of each of the levels are set out below. It is important to realise that these ratings were video clips of real situations. Adults *in situ* in their own settings have many more contextual clues to draw on than is possible through a video, so their judgments would, arguably, be more accurate, especially on the



Involvement Scale. On the other hand, judgments made of one's own colleagues or of oneself are going to be subject to distorting interpersonal dynamics. More work needs to be done on standardising the Adult Engagement scale if it is to be used for research projects with a more quasi-experimental and quantitative design.

The Adult Engagement scale is similar to a 'semantic differential scale' (Osgood et al, 1957). Semantic polarisation of the descriptors of the adult's interaction with children in terms of Sensitivity, Stimulation and Autonomy form the 'bookends' of the scale, which are then interval graded by postulating their nearness or distance from the polarised, bookend descriptors.

A summated rating scale (Likert, 1932) is another systemised technique for rating attitudes which has some relevance to the Adult Engagement Scale. In Likert scales initially a pool of items are gathered that appear to be related to the issue. These items should have a balance of positive and negative statements. Then a response categorisation system is established. Following this a large number of respondents from a sample of the target population check their attitudes in relation to the scales and establish total scores for each respondent. These are then measured for discriminative power (DP) and can be tested for reliability and validity. They are usually then ranked and the top 25% and bottom 25% and a T score applied (Edwards, 1975). In the case of the Child Involvement scale and the Adult Engagement scale, the response categories are weighted from 1 to 5. This process may be a useful means of strengthening the Scales for future use at the end of Phase 3 when more data is available. It is also intended to follow a cohort of children through a longitudinal

study to see how far high levels of 'Involvement' and 'Engagement' impact on later academic achievement.

Although these future developments will clearly enable more positivistic judgments on validity and reliability to be made, it must be stressed the Scales have already achieved substantial recognition as useful evaluative tools. Throughout the development of this work, practitioners' ideas and critique have been actively sought and their response, especially to these scales, has been consistently favourable. They have always asserted, after training and nine months use, that the scales, and the levels within them, are effective and accurate measures of what they want assessed. Further, they assert that these are the fundamentally important elements of the 'learning and teaching process' that should be measured and that these scales, as currently laid out and graded, are the appropriate and accurate tools for measuring it. The sheer numbers of practitioners involved and the fact that the cohort has included substantial numbers of adults from across the range of providers suggests that these are universal agreements at least amongst UK early childhood educators. A future task will be to develop the instruments further into 'scientific' indices which would allow their use to be formalised.

### **5.11 Professional Biography Questionnaire**

Self completed questionnaires are a very efficient means, in terms of researcher time and effort, of collecting information. The dangers are that responses can be unrepresentatively low, superficial or lack honesty. By using the participant researcher within the setting to monitor and collate the

completion of the proformas, some of this potential criticism was addressed. Questionnaires usually offer fairly closed questions (Robson,1993) so that information is easily collated and analysed. Although some questions were closed, my questionnaire was relatively open ended because I wanted to access the attitudes and feelings of the adult educators in regard to their work, children and aspirations. (see Appendix,v.). Open ended questions allowed them to do this and the computer programmes for qualitative data analysis allow for much more fine grained analysis of that information. I was particularly interested in deployment, motivation, experience, training and aspirations. I could look for some triangulation in the interviews which the participant observer conducted with her staff. I could also look at the staff's educative behaviour as revealed by the setting's 'involvement' and 'engagement' scores to obtain some degree of objective judgment on their interaction with children and look for significances against their questionnaire and interview responses. I could also make use of my research journal which I used to record observations, incidents and discussions with the practitioners I met.

### **5.12 Participant Interviews**

Semi structured interviews in which the participant researcher questioned other participants, using a framework of questions set out in the Manual, were carried out on the Manager of the setting, a sample of the staff (up to a maximum of 5), a sample of the parents (up to a maximum of 5) and a sample of the children (up to a maximum of 5). The questions (see Appendix, v.) operationalised the ten dimensions of quality described earlier. Interviews were mostly carried out by the observer researcher who had opportunities to role play this situation during the three day training period. Some interviews, however, were carried out by

others in an attempt to strengthen democratic participation. This also helped to ensure that issues about the relative status of the interviewer to the interviewee were partly addressed and that bias was minimised. Alternative interviewers were most often used in parent-parent interviews and teacher- teacher interviews. Except for the manager whose interview lasted 30 minutes, the interviews took a maximum of 30 minutes. Interviewers were advised to make notes during these guided conversations or immediately afterwards and not to transcribe the text from a tape recorder. In the case of the children's interviews, however, tape recorders were used in order to free the interviewer to have constant eye contact. The children's interviews were different in two other ways. Firstly, photographs of the setting were used as prompts to discussion and, secondly, children were interviewed in groups of three in order that a spontaneous but guided conversation could take place. Other methods such as observing video footage of the setting had been used in the first phase of the project but this method of group discussion of photographs was found to work best with these very young children.

The interviewers were asked to ensure accuracy by checking at the end of the interview that the recorded text fairly represented the interviewee's views.

The text of all the interviews was subjected to analysis and related to evidence from elsewhere, that is, the Questionnaires, the Observations and my research journal. The sections of the interview schedules that were of particular concern for me, were those relating to Learning and Teaching Styles (q.3), Staffing (q.5) and Relationships and Interactions (q.7); (see Appendix vi.).

## **5.13 Analysis Procedures**

### **5.13.1 NUD.IST**

The interview responses and those in the open ended questionnaire were subjected to qualitative analysis using the computer based Non numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing (Richards et al.,1994). Richards et al. claim that 'the ways in which large scale textual records are now handled constitute a new brand of data analysis.' p.3 . Qualitative analysis is a process of describing, looking for interconnections between, and classifying, data. In this process, I acknowledge the significance of the distinctive features of qualitative analysis set out by Dey (1993):

- \* Meanings are context-dependent
- \* Meanings are always negotiable between different observers
- \* In social science, it is acceptable to ask subjects what they mean
- \* Process involves analysing changes over time
- \* Change can be analysed through phrases, key incidents or the complex interplay of factors
- \* Material as well as social factors affect change.

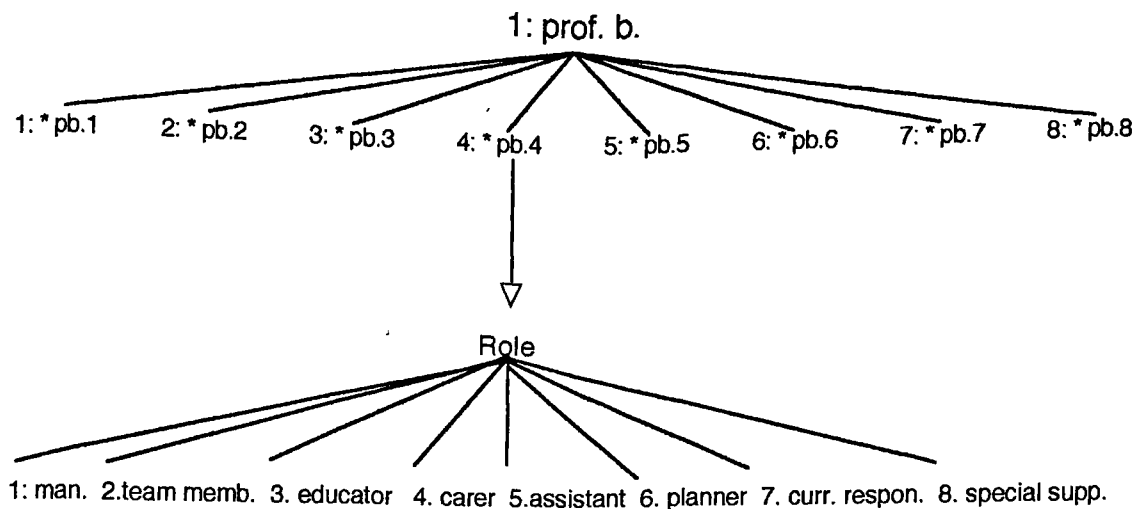
Dey (1993) p. 39

NUD.IST operates by supporting indexing, searching and theorising. It helps by allowing the user to manage, explore and search the text of documents that it stores. It makes possible the generation of statistical summaries such as category, phrase or word frequency but it also allows much more sophisticated links. Because it also holds original data text at these nodes, it is possible to go deeper into the categorised text in order to sustain hypotheses about potential links. It allows different segments of the data to be coded, grouped and stored so that categories for thinking can be explored and justify connections. These indexed categories hold text that can be searched. Categories of data are stored using an unlimited number of categories and subcategories in what

Miles and Huberman (1995) call a 'folk taxonomy'. Particular labels are assigned to particular groups of knowledge and defined. In NUD.IST these are 'nodes', which might have sub-nodes ('children') thus building up a 'tree' of defined data consisting of a 'root' definition from which branch out the sub nodes which, in turn, can each have sub nodes.

In the example set out in the 'tree', figure 22 overleaf, the root is '1: prof. b'. This shows that all text stored under the bar code '1' comes from replies written by participants in the Professional Biography questionnaire. A further division of 'children' from this root node classify replies to each of the questions. '1: \*pb1.', for example, contains the text of replies to questions in the Professional Biography Questionnaire. The node '4:\* pb4.', illustrated overleaf, contains all textual responses to the question 'What is your role?'. This node has further 'children' which allow this data to be classified according to the response, '1: Manager', '2: Member of a team' and so on. This is where textual answers to the question at '4.\*pb4.' are stored. Every piece of text can thus be given a bar code. In the case of those who claim a managerial role, these will be stored with all other managers' comments under (1 4 1). Each of these numbers corresponds to the identified position of the appropriate node in the tree when they are read vertical. So for (1 4 1) the first number (1) indicates this is a Professional Biography response, the second number (4) identifies that this is a response to a question about role and the third number (1) says this particular

**Figure 22, A Diagrammatic Example of part of a NUDIST Tree**



response identified a 'managerial' role and holds the appropriate text segment. All the texts carry an identifying tag, so texts held in a particular node can be easily recognised. Elements of the text can thus be very easily assigned, recalled and linked. Hypotheses can be postulated and detailed textual evidence used in their support. Evidence is thus accumulated inductively from open ended questions allowing for the real lived experiences and voices to emerge.

The example lists only one small part of the whole tree but the complete list of defined nodes for this study are listed in Appendix vii. The nodes are built up by first reading through perhaps a third of the text and postulating categories. Sometimes it becomes apparent that further categories need to be created; sometimes it is possible to merge categories, but eventually all the data is stored and the process of analysis and category association can begin.

### **5.13.2 SPSS**

The second computer-assisted data analysis programme in my study was the widely used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), whose application is explained by Bryman and Cramer (1995). It should be remembered that this is not a statistical study and that quantitative techniques were used only to look for supportive evidence for the qualitative data. For this reason more use is made of graphs generated from simple frequency data than of more sophisticated techniques such as analysis of variance (ANOVA) or multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). However, comparison of means is possible and some of this computer generated analysis is used. Areas of the study which were suitable were such issues as numbers, types and distribution of settings; comparison of mean qualification level by setting type; means levels of Involvement and Engagement scores by type of setting; mean levels of the three categories of Engagement, and such like.

### **5.14 Ethical Issues**

Throughout the study there was a concern for ethical issues. Truth, knowledge and appropriate method are not the only characteristics of 'good' research, we must also ensure that the rightness or wrongness of our actions are considered. House (1990) suggests three basic principles:

1. mutual respect - understanding others' aims and interests, not damaging self esteem, not condescending.
2. non-coercion and non-manipulation - not using force or threats or leading others to cooperate when it is against their interests.
3. support for democratic values and institutions - commitment to equality and liberty, working against oppressions and subjugation.

House, 1990

The EEL Project adhered to 'principles of operation' which were set out clearly



in the Training Manual (Pascal, Bertram et al., 1995):

Evaluation and Development are viewed as inseparable.

The process of Evaluation and Development is shared, democratic and collaborative

The process is opted into not imposed

The framework for evaluation is rigorous but flexible and non-judgmental

The action plans are supported and followed through

The process is intended to empower and develop practitioners, not to threaten and to judge.

Pascal, Bertram et al., 1995; p.11

It was felt that whilst firm judgments on quality needed to be made and an 'outsider' perspective was essential, assessor and assessed should know and trust each other. Dialogue should be clear, systematic and agreed and take place over a period of time. Evidence should be gathered together and questioned together, democratically so that all felt that their voice was heard. Settings were encouraged to take ownership of the process and its outcomes and all participants were encouraged to make a contribution which was acknowledged and valued. It was felt that the evidence from school improvement, school effectiveness and total quality management studies suggested that this was not only ethical but actually enhanced the process of evaluative research and laid the foundation for developmental success (Hopkins, 1986, 1992; Louis & Miles, 1991; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Goddard & Leask, 1992; Scheerins, 1992; West-Burnham, 1992; Murgatroyd & Morgan, 1993).

A 'Letter of Agreement' jointly signed by the Head of the Setting, the Support Worker, the External Advisor and the Director of the Project made explicit the

nature of the shared responsibilities (see appendix, viii). It contains the declaration that the Project team would 'ensure that all information gathered is treated confidentially and identifying names are removed' and that External Advisors would 'ensure all written accounts generated are validated by the participants themselves first and only released to a wider audience with the agreement of the head of the setting'. Setting Heads were strongly advised to notify parents and children that the setting was participating in a research process which might involve them and their children.

Anonymity, informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, fairness, avoidance of imposition, harm, detachment or wrong, participant confirmation of data, cultural sensitivity and responsiveness (Flinders, 1992) were all incorporated into the research process and made explicit. Ethical issues at all stages of the process have clear implications for analysis and the quality of conclusions. Indeed, there is a sense in which my whole choice of methodology was for me an ethical issue. As Walsh et al (1993) suggested, 'interpretative' research, his preferred term for research which is mainly qualitative but includes quantitative elements, is predicated on an ethical dimension,

Interpretative research has an important place in research on the education of young children. It has the potential, in the negotiated, collaborative relationship between the researcher and the researched, to give voice and visibility to those groups, children and practitioners, who historically have been silenced and isolated. When those children and practitioners stand in front of the mirror that research provides, the image they see should be their own.'

Walsh et al 1993, p. 464-476

## **Chapter 6**

### **Evidence and Analysis**

#### **6.1 Research Questions:**

In this section I want to discuss my findings in relation to some of the research questions outlined in the introductory chapter of this study. It might be helpful to set these out again and see how far some have already been addressed.

*1. What is the current state of knowledge on effective educators of young children?*

This question was the main focus of the substantial literature review underpinning Chapter 3, 'The Conceptual Framework' and Chapter 4, 'The Concept of Engagement'. It was also addressed in 'Contexts' in Chapter 2 which looked at explorations for meanings, early childhood provision in the UK and the relationship with the EEL Project. Finally, it is hoped that the concluding discussion of this study in Chapter 8, 'Discussion and Recommendations' will be able to summarise the small contribution to the knowledge on effective early childhood educators that is the purpose of this thesis.

*2. How might effective educators be evaluated and assessed?*

This question was broadly addressed in Chapter 3, which explained an innovative conceptual framework for evaluating early childhood settings. It was explained in greater detail in Chapter 4, where the focus was specifically on the evaluation and assessment of early childhood educators. Chapter 5, which set

out the methodology of this study, also provides details of the evaluatory process and a justification of the particular methods chosen.

In this Chapter, therefore, I shall address the final three research questions:

*3 .What are the characteristics of those who currently educate young children?  
How do these characteristics affect the teaching and learning process?*

*4. Can early childhood educators self evaluate their educative behaviour? What  
does the evidence show and how might this evidence be used?*

*5. How far does a 'Professional Self Image' affect an early childhood educator's  
ability to be an 'Engager'.*

I shall begin with Research Question, 3 intending first to examine the characteristics of early childhood workers as revealed by their responses to four items in the Professional Biography Questionnaire;

pb. 5, 'Why did you become an early childhood educator?'

pb. 6, 'How would you like your job to progress?'

pb. 7, 'What would help you?'

pb. 8c, 'What staff development opportunities would you like to have?'

In addition, I would like to consider the characteristics revealed by the career explained in greater detail in Chapter 4, where the focus was specifically on the evaluation and assessment of early childhood educators. Chapter 5, which set out the methodology of this study, also provides details of the evaluatory process and a justification of the particular methods chosen.

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pb. 6, 'How would you like your job to progress?'

pb. 7, 'What would help you?'

pb. 8c, 'What staff development opportunities would you like to have?'

In addition, I would like to consider the characteristics revealed by the career patterns, training, and qualifications of early childhood educators and their assessment of their role in their settings (pb1; pb2; pb3; pb4) This evidence will be substantiated and triangulated through Participant Interviews and through recordings in my research journal, and later through the quantitative data which came from the setting observations.

## **6.2 The Study Cohort**

The cohort in this study comprised a range of different practitioners in a variety

of different types of settings. Not everyone of the 29 types of setting described by Clark (1988) are represented in the cohort (see Figure 23) but staff from the four main kinds of centre based early childhood provision account for most of the cohort. Not all the participants in Phase 2 of the EEL Project are included as only those who had fully completed a Professional Biography Questionnaire and participated in the Observation Scales were targeted. The total number of adults involved was therefore 169 and the number of settings was 70.

**Figure 23: Numbers of adults and setting types**

Preschool Learning Alliance	44	adults	in	19	settings
Reception Classes	43	adults	in	19	settings
Nursery Classes	41	adults	in	19	settings
Nursery Schools	29	adults	in	9	settings
Private Day Nurseries	5	adults	in	2	settings
Early Years Units	4	adults	in	1	setting
Family Centres	3	adults	in	1	setting
Totals:	169	adults	in	70	settings

The Preschool Learning Alliance claims to be the largest providers of places for 3 and 4 year olds, (Lochrie, 1996) although government figures are queried by Moss, (1995). PLA settings are usually sessional and sometimes operate only 2 or 3 days a week. If figures are weighted to take account of this part time

provision then they are not the largest providers. The largest providers of full time places for 4 year olds are Reception Classes in the state education sector. Nursery Classes form a larger group than Nursery Schools and their number is increasing with the expansion in provision that followed political changes in Local Government in 1995. The cohort, therefore, is broadly representational in its major elements of the type of provision available to 3 and 4 year olds in the UK.

The type of role fulfilled by educators in the cohort (see Figure 24) is also broadly representational.

**Figure 24: Types of role in the study cohort**

Teachers	63 adults	{	Headteachers	6 adults
		{	Deputy Heads	3 adults
		{	Coordinators	13 adults
		{	Class Teachers	41 adults
Playgroup	44 adults	{	Leaders	26 adults
		{	Assistants	18 adults
NNEB	45 adults			
Non Teaching Assistants in Education				17 adults
				(n = 169 )

\*The SRCN was a Coordinator in a Family Centre. In the statistical analysis, she appears as a 'coord'.

### 6.3 Participant Interviews

Participant Interviews involved a slightly larger cohort of 834 participants from 63 settings, including children (293), parents (304), managers (64) and practitioners (173). An interview schedule was used but I am limiting my data in this study to supportive evidence emerging from two questions 'What kind of

relationship do you feel should be established in the setting?' and 'What role do you perform in this setting?' The question was contextualised to the respondent and not always asked in this exact way. The open question seeks to uncover views about educative relationships within the setting. Illustrative responses will be used to triangulate data from other sources.

## **6.4 Evidence**

### **6.4.1 Roles, Promotion and Managerial Responsibility for Early Childhood Educators**

One means of describing early childhood educators is by looking at their roles within their settings. Qualified teachers (62) formed the largest group in this study comprising of Headteachers (6), Deputy Heads (3), Coordinators (12) and Class Teachers (41). An examination of their roles gives some illumination to the discussion about promotion and managerial responsibility. The six teaching Headteachers were all in Nursery Schools, except one, who was the Principal of a Private Day Nursery. The Deputy Heads were in a Nursery School, a Nursery Class and a Reception Class. Within the state education primary sector, where most four year olds are found, there was thus very little evidence (one Deputy in 19 Primary settings) of early childhood educators being recognised as senior managers. This lack of managerial representation amongst staff working with young children within the state Primary schools perhaps reflects on the status of early childhood educators within that sector. It has worrying implications for early childhood practitioners' ability to influence decision making, particularly with regard to resource issues, at a time when more power than ever before rests with Primary Headteachers for distributing funds. This concern is also supported by an analysis of the figures for the



distribution of 'Coordinators'. The twelve Coordinators were all class teachers with some additional responsibilities. Four of them were curriculum specialists and eight were 'early years coordinators' or 'Key Stage 1' coordinators. Of the forty three adults working in nineteen reception classes only 5 were coordinators, four of whom were 'early years coordinators', whose brief was restricted to the Year Group they coordinated. My research log has several references to discussions with early childhood teachers who felt they had not achieved a curriculum subject post because they were perceived as unable to have a whole school view of a subject. The responsibilities of early childhood coordinators did not carry throughout the school, whereas other posts of responsibility, notably the curriculum coordinators did have whole school status. This view of a perceived lack of width of experience did not appear, however, to stop promotion for later years colleagues with no early years experience. The inability to operate outside their age phase must have serious implications for early childhood workers in the group dynamic of the staffroom and raises again the issue of their ability to influence and impact on policy decisions when these are seen as whole school decisions. Again, this would seem to raise the issue of a lack of opportunity for early childhood educators in the Primary sector to acquire (or to actively seek and accept) managerial responsibility for early childhood educators in the Primary sector. Many early years workers, however, simply preferred not to seek managerial posts. It was not uncommon for the view to be expressed amongst them that job satisfaction rested in continuing contact with the children and that this would be threatened by promotion out of the classroom. There was also a rejection of the type of work they perceived managers as having to do. A Reception Class teacher said,

I want to continue to work with young children. If any promotion were offered I wouldn't wish to have my time taken away from

contact with children, I don't enjoy paperwork

Document 2\_17 pb2

This was not a sentiment felt only in the school sector. A playgroup assistant commented,

I am happy with my job. I do not at present wish to progress to be a playgroup leader.

Document 4\_13 pb2

A State Registered Child Nurse working in a Family Centre said,

I would like to continue working with pre fives until I retire.

Document 3\_20 pb1

What really mattered to these early childhood workers was the close relationship with the children and their parents. They wanted to become better at their jobs, better at what they enjoyed doing. They, generally, did not see development as a means to promotion but as a means to improve themselves as practitioners and quality of their interaction with children.

I would like to continue teaching early years either in a reception class or a nursery. I would like to improve my teaching skills so that the children in my care have maximum input from me and the organisation.

Document 2\_04 pb3

I want my job to progress by continuing to learn/develop my understanding of how children learn and continue to apply this in my role as a teacher to help provide under 5 year old children with a positive, valuable, enjoyable, appropriate foundation.

Document 8\_06 pb2

I became an early childhood educator because I respect and value children and find them fascinating. I enjoy children's company and their clear way of looking at the world and I wanted to work in an environment that was meaningful to me - not just a job. I want to continue working with children - our children are our future - and I haven't really thought of how I could progress. I am

enjoying what I do at present. I haven't given much thought to the future.

Document 5\_04 pb1

Even those who implied a degree of ambition which might take them out of the classroom seemed to be reluctant to stay within their own setting:

I am very happy in the classroom and have enjoyed sharing my ideas and expertise with other teachers. If my career were to move out of the classroom I expect it to become advisory rather than head-teacher, maybe in a different L.E.A.

Document 8\_12 pb1

The commitment to the children was always a continuing part of the ambition and a view of a different future always contained the link to children, as this comment from a teacher in a reception class suggests,

I would like to continue teaching young children and maybe become eventually Principal of a small school, still teaching young children.

Document 4\_01 pb1

So strong was some teachers' commitment to children and colleagues that they even felt guilty when courses took them away from their setting.

I attend all inservice training days and in March 1994 I took a 'Communicating With Parents' course. This course left me feeling extremely guilty, my two colleagues had to cope with my thirteen children plus their own.

Document 2\_11 pb5

This impression of the power of the inviolable bond between adults and children was reinforced during my involvement in the EEL Project training which preceded the Cycle of Quality Evaluation and Development they were to begin in their settings. Four educators at different regional venues gave similar feedback when asked to complete a review questionnaire, following their three day training programme, on how the course might be improved. Their

suggestion was that the training days should not be consecutive as they, the practitioners, did not like being continuously separated from their children for that long (Research Diary, October 14th 1994).

The scarcity of managerial appointments for early childhood workers are not then simply about lack of status or gender discrimination, although these elements are undoubtedly present. An anecdotal story of governors at an applicant interview who believed promotion came in the form of a steady progression up the age range was recounted as evidence of the lack of recognition (Research Diary, September 28th 1994). Undoubtedly the misinformed belief of those Governors comes from creating illusion out of observed reality. Most early years teachers will affirm the adage, 'if you want to get on, get out' especially if one is considering reception teachers in primary schools. The relatively small number of early years' workers in posts of responsibility are indicative of their lack of status, lack of recognition and of differential promotion. But this study shows that this lack of promotion is also, in part, about the attitudes of the practitioners themselves. There is, of course, no implication that this is anything but beneficial to the practitioners and their children. In the wider context, however, concerns must be raised about the resultant comparative lack of knowledge of managers in many Primary school settings. Few will have had practical, 'hands on' experience of these youngest children and their unique needs. At a time when the voucher system is making more schools admit ever younger children, it must be worrying that the professional experiences of many managers may be too inappropriate and inadequate for them to make informed decisions about resourcing and other priorities.

The responses to the Professional Biography Questionnaire, Item 6, which asked 'How would you like your job to progress?' are presented over leaf in Figure 24. The responses to this open ended question were categorised using NU.DIST and then tabulated and ranked. It was then possible to look at these responses according to role type of the respondent. Valid comparisons could be made by expressing the frequency of each category of response as a percentage of the total cohort of any particular role group (highlighted in **bold** in the table). Many practitioners would offer more than one response, of course. The largest category of response from 58 of the 169 practitioners (34%) identified 'training and self development' as the means by which they would progress. An unqualified assistant in a private day nursery said,

I would like to become a Nursery Nurse. Training and encouragement would help me.

Document: 3\_06 pb1

Interestingly, unqualified non teaching assistants (NTA) in schools were the most committed to professional development of all the role groups and, ironically, those least likely to have access to it. As Figure 24 shows, 50% of NTAs (9 out of 17) indicated a desire for further training.

Like the NTA quoted above, a Scottish Senior Teacher wanted further qualifications and also wanted to remain in contact with young children.

I would like to continue my nursery experience - possibly through further qualifications. I would like to eventually end up working with nursery classes and continuing with them onto P1 setting in rotation.

Document: 3-17 pb2

A review of the all 58 texts in this category indicates that, when identifying a

desire to take up further training, most early childhood educators refer to desire to take up further training, most early childhood educators refer to

**Figure 24: Responses by role type to pb.6 'How would you like your job to progress?' (n=169)**

Categorised Response	Overall % Items	PLA Staff		Teaching Staff				NNEB %		NTA %	
		Leader	Assistant	% Heads	Deputy	Coord.	Class				
Update Training	34 58	13 8	30 5	3	1	22 3	15	39	14	31	9 52
No Plan	21 36	11 6	25 1	0	2	11 8		18	11	24	3 18
More Same	21 36	10 5	23 5	1	1	13 5	6	21	8	18	4 24
More but Different	15 26	6 3	14 3		0	11 1		18	8	18	1 6
More Recognition	12 20	6 4	14 2		0	2 0		3	10	22	2 12
More Admin Management	11 19	1 1	2 0		1	15 2		24	3	7	0 0
A change	7.112	5 1	11 4		0	5 0		8	2	4	0 0
More Responsibility	6.511	5 3	11 2		0	4 0		6	1	2	1 6
Becoming a Trainer, Advis.	4.1 7	1 1	2 0		3	6 0		10	0	0	0 0
Don't Know	1.8 3	1 1	2 0		1	1 0		1	0	0	1 6
Cohort Numbers											
		PLA Ldr + Ass. = 44		HT	Teachers DH + Coord. + Tea. = 63			NNEB [45]		NTA [17]	

their belief that this will enhance their ability as practitioners. Again, their view of career and development is centred on becoming a better practitioner rather than on following a route of increasing responsibility that would take them away from the classroom. A reception teacher in a rural school was typical,

I am very happy in my present situation (third year). Through in-service training, I wish to understand children's learning difficulties more fully and any other training which can benefit me in my present situation.

Document 4\_04pb11

A Welsh Early Years' Coordinator in a Nursery Class also summarises this attitude,

As well as being Teacher-in-Charge of the nursery, I am an Early Years Coordinator, and I find this provides me with sufficient challenge. Contact with the children is very important to me for job satisfaction, so I am reluctant to undertake any further responsibilities, which could take me out of the classroom. My aim is to be better at teaching my children.

Document 7\_08pb2

An experienced reception teacher makes the same point slightly differently,

There is little opportunity for promotion within the primary sector (few allowances) other than deputy headships and then after that one does not actually work with the children if promoted further. Progress is therefore more through self development.

Document 7\_10 pb4

The impression created is that these educators do not lack ambition but that their ambition is directed towards improving their skills as practitioners and remaining in contact with children. A playgroup assistant did not want to

become a play group leader but considered moving out of the sector with a new qualification,

I would like to progress by getting an NVQ in childcare and help at the local school or nursery, specialising in special needs children.

Document 5\_05pb1

I don't feel at the moment that I wish to be a supervisor. There is more time spent on paperwork at times than working with the children. I would however be very interested in courses that give more practical skills, ideas than - "Committee" running etc.

Document 6\_02 pb1

It is important to emphasise that although there was a general reluctance to become involved in developments which might take them away from the children and there was clear evidence of a deep seated attachment to children, this was not merely woolly sentimentalism. What also clearly matters to these practitioners is their concept of themselves as competent educators. This was a cross-sector attitude:

I see my job progression in terms of increasing and developing my experience, ability and skills through further training. The strength of playgroups is in their informal, family setting, however, there is a requirement for more advanced training akin to nursery teachers : the first 5 years are vital to learning and yet children are often experiencing a less skilled environment.

Document: 6\_02 pb2

I want my job to progress by continuing to learn/develop my understanding of how children learn and continue to apply this in my role as a teacher to help provide under 5 year old children with a positive, valuable, enjoyable, appropriate foundation.

Document: 8\_06 pb4

What comes through the texts is a deeply felt vocational commitment to young



children's care *and* education. Career development only really surfaces as an extension of that desire and is rarely directed at personal gain of professional status or salary. This perspective, as the extracts show, is shared across the range of settings and types of role and is confirmed by the fairly evenly distributed response category 'up date training' in Figure 25.

The second, frequency ranked, category of response in figure 25 shows that 'no plans' described 36 of the 169 (26%) in the cohort. If this is combined with the exactly equal responses to the category 'more same', (i.e. 'I wish to carry on doing what I am doing now') in represents a large group of practitioners who are content in continuing what they are presently doing. This is not complacency. There are a number of reasons for this, some very practical and pragmatic, as this Scottish Headteacher in a Nursery School explains,

At the moment, I am quite happy doing what I am doing in the Nursery. I would like some more training specific to the nursery, but I feel I can't commit myself yet as I feel my children still need me at home as my husband works offshore.

Document 3\_12 pb1

A teacher in a nursery class explains that her desire to remain where she is does not mean she wishes to stagnate,

I am at the stage of my career where I am happy with my job and at the present time I am not seeking promotion, although I want to keep abreast of professional developments.

Document 2\_01 pb1

A playgroup leader in Northern Ireland indicates that remaining where she is is a positive choice not inertia,

I am happy with my work at present and do not feel I would get any more job satisfaction anywhere else. I want to keep up to

date training whenever available.

Document 4 \_13pb2

#### **6.4.2 Stereotyping and Gender**

A career in early childhood education and care remains essentially the domain of women. The settings in this study were geographically widely spread and included a range of providers yet not one of the 169 adults involved was a male. The absence of men was reinforced by their exclusion from the discussion, literally. A textual search using NUD.IST looked for the defined letter strings listed in Figure 26 amongst the 169 Professional Biography questionnaires. These 169 documents contained about 80,000 words and were self completed. They were the early childhood workers responses to open ended questions asking about training, experience, role, activity, aspirations and commitment. Responses which contained the word 'parent' were predominantly about their role in involving parents in their children's learning activities or about liaising and welcoming parents into the setting.

#### **Figure 26: Text Search on Nomenclature of Parenting**

NUD.IST Text Search of Total On-line Documents (n= 169)

Letter string	No. of Documents	Percent of total	Letter string	No. of Documents	Percent of total
<b>'parents'</b>	49	29%			
<b>'mother'</b>	36	18%	<b>'father'</b>	0	0%
<b>'mum'</b>	12	6.5%	<b>'dad'</b>	0	0%

These three examples are typical of Nursery Schools,

For the child I perform the role of an approachable, responsive adult whom he can befriend, trust and learn things through. For the Parent I am an adult outside the home sharing an interest in the education and well being of their child.

Document 3\_12 pb2

My role is to provide safe, stimulating experiences for the children in my care, and build a supportive relationship with Parents and families.

Document 3\_04 pb1

My role is team leader in the Nursery - offering support and guidance to other staff and Parents, but aiming for a sense of partnership and shared understanding, being a key person to the children - someone they can trust and respect and enjoy being with. My role is also taking advice and guidance where necessary from the head teacher. I would like to get better at what I do so that I can share a degree of expertise with others with greater confidence and feel I am offering the children, Parents and staff I work with the best opportunities.

Document 3\_05 pb2

Families, of course, are not homogeneous and changing social patterns have created much greater diversity. Phrases such as 'parents and carers' or 'significant adults in the child's life' are increasingly used by researchers to reflect this greater diversity but this sensitivity was not reflected in the texts. 'Parents' was adjoined to 'carers' in just 3 of the 49 references which suggests perhaps that early childhood workers are still seeing families in a fairly stereotypical way. This stereotyping was even more apparent when gender issues were considered. Although the word 'parent' is not gender specific, it was sometimes apparent from the meaning within the text, that 'parents' were thought of as 'mothers'.

I would like to have more help from Parents. We have a rota where parents are able to fill in which dates are convenient, unfortunately, parents are not co-operating and we will have to revert back to a system which we used a long time ago which I didn't want to have to use but we have not got a lot of choice. In the past we have always had a mother helper at each session voluntarily, but now we are very short of help even though a letter has been sent out stating our difficulties and asking them to co-operate.

Document 6\_06 pb3

The proceeding abstract reveals another issue. It was very rare for references to parents to be negative, only 3 texts in 49, but each of these three was a playgroup setting. Some of the urban playgroups were clearly having problems with their voluntary helpers.

It would help me for Parents to take up their responsibilities within the group, to do rotas when they are supposed to, to fundraise properly and generally stop moaning at the staff. I would like to have a course on how to handle awkward Parents. Also on how to keep track of fees and funds. I don't feel anyone within playgroup is paid enough especially when we sometimes have to take abuse from Parents. We also have to put in time outside playgroup hours that is not recognised in our wages.

Document 5\_03 pb1

There is an irony, here, in that the PLA at national executive level would claim that one of their strengths lies in their close relationships with parents and carers. Undoubtedly many Playgroups are sustained by the voluntary contribution of helpers and their involvement can become beneficial for the educative development of the children and the careers of the carers themselves. The world of work, however, is changing and, especially in our urban communities, women are increasingly, and men decreasingly, likely to be working. Women's work may be low paid and part time but Playgroups are

going to need to change the nature of their operation regarding the use of voluntary staff or address the issue of involving more men.

Many staff across the range of providers referred to their own experiences as mothers both in response to question 2 in the Professional Biography

Questionnaire about their qualifications and in response to question 3 about their experience. Typical examples were from a teacher,

13 years as a mother, I have 3 children.

Document 4\_13 pb2.

and from a playgroup leader,

20 years of Motherhood

Document 8\_19 pb2.

The 36 references to 'mother' noted in Figure 26 were from PLA, Nursery and School staff and usually referred to their own motherhood as appropriate experience for their involvement as educators of young children. There were also, within this group, three references to earlier experiences with 'mother and toddler' groups. In a country where some 16% of the main carers of children are men, a number that is increasing as work patterns change, it seems an anomaly to exclude men from the nomenclature.

Curiously, the 12 references to 'mum' were all located within the PLA sector and might reflect differences in the nature of professional discourse. Several of

these references showed how the voluntary workers in playgroups often became committed to the work even after their children had left.

I had one year's experience at Mums and Toddlers. I started helping at playgroup after Mums and Toddlers, when my daughter was attending the playgroup and found that I really enjoyed working with children and I realised that I would miss working with the children when my daughter left. So when a vacancy arose I applied for the vacancy.

Document 6\_01 pb2..

I became an early childhood educator because after helping as a rota Mum when my children were in playgroup I realised I enjoyed working with under five's.

Document 6\_03 pb1

Having been a Mum myself, I could see how valuable the early years of a child's life are - how much they learn and how important play is for stimulation - understanding new concepts and building self confidence.

Document 4\_11 pb2

The issue of gender in the staff involved in centre based care and education of our youngest children clearly needs to be addressed at societal and policy level. Men need to become much more involved in the upbringing of children. One way in which this might happen is for their existence as carers and educators to be recognised. The evidence from this text search indicates that this is not part of the reflective analysis or discourse of 169 practitioners. No reference to 'father(s)' or 'dad(s)' was found in 80,000 words of text about early childhood provision.

#### **6.4.3 Attitudes to working with young children**

A further textual search using NUD.IST looked for defined the letter strings

listed in Figure 27 (over leaf) amongst the texts of 169 Professional Biography questionnaires; documents which between them held nearly 80,000 words.

The words were chosen to offer semantic opposites to see if there were a range of attitudes. The uniform pattern of the frequency of the positive words in the text and the complete absence of their negative opposites suggests a fairly strong emotional commitment by early childhood educators to their work.

**Figure 27 Textual Analysis for 'Attitude' Words**  
 NUD.IST Text Search of Total On-line Documents (n= 169)

Letter string	No. of Documents	Percent of total	Letter string	No. of Documents	Percent of total
'like'	158	93%	'dislike'	0	0%
'enjoy'	80	47%	'suffer'	0	0%
'happy'	49	29%	'unhappy'	1	.59%
'reward'	20	12%	'punish'	0	0%
'love'	15	8.9%	'hate'	0	0%
'content'	5	3.0%	'not content'	0	0%

The single negative word 'unhappy' was used by early years' coordinator working in a nursery class in the following context:

I became an early childhood educator because I like young children, their directness and honesty. It is good to be involved right at the beginning when children are starting school life - one believes one can make a difference. Further, I had an unhappy childhood myself, and this despite being bright, caused me considerable learning difficulties e.g. I didn't read until I was 8. I know how difficult things can be for children.

Document 7\_08 pb2

Clearly, and overwhelmingly, the text of Practitioners reflection and discourse on their work was positive. This viewpoint went across the role type and across the setting type. A nursery nurse working in a reception class commented,

For the present future I am happy in my present position, however as my own children grow up and I can devote more time to my career I would like to become involved with nursery aged children. I would like to work in a school nursery being responsible for my own group of children.

Document 2\_04 pb1

An early years coordinator in a nursery class felt,

I am very happy as things stand, although I always like to keep abreast of current trends and initiatives.

Document 2\_01 pb2

A playgroup leader wrote,

I am happy with my work at present and do not feel I would get any more job satisfaction anywhere else. I want to keep up to date with training whenever available.

Document 4\_13 pb2

At its most extreme, the attachment and security that most early childhood workers felt towards their setting could almost be termed isolationist. For some young playgroup workers, the first step into returning to or beginning the world of work after having children was daunting enough. The limit of their ambition, at least at this time in their lives, was being part of a caring group. An assistant in a playgroup asked what would help her to progress says,

There is nothing that would help me that I am not already getting from my team, children and the setting

Document 5\_12 pb3

A teacher in a reception class of a primary school said,



I am happy doing what I am doing - I have a senior management post, I am working with younger children now which I enjoy. I would like to continue teaching in early years for the foreseeable future.

Document 8\_04 pb1

Not only were most adults happy and enjoying what they were doing but a central tenet of their practice was that their setting should be a warm, welcoming place where the children's socialisation and stimulation was also built on happiness,

My role, I feel as a playleader is that I am in playgroup to help maintain a safe happy and stable environment where children can develop and socialise and build their confidence. I am also ready if need be to help and support parents and carers.

Document 5\_06 pb2

My role is as coordinator and provider of a range of experiences for children to begin their school life in as happy and stimulating an environment as possible. Where they will blossom and learn in a non-threatening situation, to become sociable people.

Document 8\_03 pb2

At a very deep emotional level, therefore, for most practitioners, security, happiness, enjoyment and warmth pervade their reflections on their work and interaction with children. What 'outsiders' such as King (1978) or Woodhead (1996) might see as soft, feminine indulgence, the practitioners would defend as being part of their central motivation as carers and educators. They would also claim that sensitivity and warmth towards young children is an essential prerequisite of effective practice which needs to be established before secondary needs, such as stimulation, can be addressed (Maslow, 1958; Harlow & Harlow, 1962; Pringle, 1975). What we should consider is the match between the need of the adults to care, and the need of the children to be cared

for and, where they are imbalanced, the influence this has on the effectiveness of a setting as a learning environment. Overwhelmingly, however, practitioners link educational stimulation to care. They see appropriate stimulation as being a necessary element of caring.

#### **6.4.4 NNEB**

In a profession whose members generally appear to gain so much job satisfaction from their relationships, the group who appear to be most dissatisfied are those who have a Nursery Nurses Examination Board Diploma (NNEB) or hold a similar level of qualification. All the NNEBs in the cohort (45 adults) were in state educational settings, either primary schools, nursery classes or nursery schools. Setting type was not a significant variable amongst this group as there were no discernible differences between the expressed attitudes of one sub group and another. Figure 25 shows that nearly a quarter of the NNEBs (22%, 10 adults out of 45) volunteered that 'more recognition' was a significant factor in their job progression (as measured by their NUD.IST categorised responses to the P.B.Q., Item 6). This was substantially more than similarly responding teachers (3%, 2 adults out of 62, both in primary schools) and more than playgroup workers (14%, 6 adults out of 44) and more than NTAs (12%, 2 adults out of 17) who also were exclusively drawn, in this study, from the education sector. This newly qualified teacher is aware of the value of her NNEBs,

I would like to feel more responsible but the Nursery seems to run 'on its own'. The Nursery Nurses are very good and they are aware of the children's strengths and limitations.

Document: 2\_18 pb1

But this NNEB clearly feels she is asked to contribute but does not feel she is

acknowledged,

I would like Nursery Nurses to be recognised as the highly qualified people they are. At present the job I am in enables me to share my abilities, ideas and skills so I cannot see it progressing into something better.

Document: 2\_16 pb1

This NNEB in a reception class says simply,

I would like to be included in the discussion/planning meetings with the teachers.

Document: 2\_06 pb2

This was a metropolitan authority where the LEA had insisted on the use of qualified NNEBs to support teachers in Reception and Nursery Classes and in Nursery Schools, but clearly there was an issue that needed to be addressed, as these three texts illustrate:

I would like to be able to gain promotion within the education department, for a NNEB certificate to be shown more respect and also to get higher salaries.

Document 2\_17 pb1

I would like a higher salary and recognition within the educational establishment and also training for promotion.

Document 2\_17 pb3

I would like better career moves for nursery nurses - recognition for nursery nurses. I would like to have more first aid, special needs, music, dance, drama and art courses all of which should be appropriate to the pre-school age.

Document: 2\_11 pb5

But the issue was not confined to just one authority. This NNEB feeling rather isolated in a Nursery class attached to a small school wanted to have opportunities to be able to share with others, whom she felt would have similar concerns to her own,

I would like to have better recognition for me in the school, I feel I could help other staff e.g. do observations. More courses just for nursery nurses without teachers being present.

Document: 8\_21 pb2

In the increasing focus on multidisciplinary integration it is salutary to be reminded that there is also a case for allowing forums for those who feel isolated within their own sector to meet as an exclusive group to share their interests.

Two Scottish SNEBs expressed a view, about the lack of promotion prospects rather than a perceived lack of recognition. Lack of promotion opportunities, of course, suggests a lack of recognition was inherent in the system. This SNEB worked in a reception class with a Senior Teacher,

There are no promotions in the region for Nursery Nurses, the only way of promotion is to change to social working. I would personally like my job to progress by gaining experience in special needs and training etc. I would like to have the opportunity to go to the one year HNC Nursery Nurse Course.

Document: 3\_05 pb1

This SNEB worked in a nursery class with a Senior Teacher,

I would like my job to progress by Nursery Nurses being placed in P1 classrooms so that a Nursery Nurse could rotate between P1 and Nursery. I would like new courses to be offered for Nursery Nurses and Nursery teams. At the present time I can see no progression for Nursery Nurses. I would like a career ladder for Nursery Nurses and courses set up to achieve this. I would like a set amount of money to be set aside each year purely for Nursery Nurses and also funding for cover while Nursery Nurses attend courses.

Document: 3\_11 pb1

This was an issue for NNEBs but it was also a problem for NTAs. This one

worked with a reception teacher in another LEA,

I don't feel my job can progress in terms of promotion, as there isn't a next step to go to. I would like to learn more about the job I am doing, but feel the only way to do this is by gaining information from the nursery teacher

Document: 8\_09 pb1, NTA

The need here is very similar to the expressed needs of early childhood teachers and other practitioners for professional development. The focus is on a professional career based on improvement in performance not promotion to administration or management. But even so, it is possible to have a career structure, which, either acknowledges experience, for example, by offering similar incremental wage increases as teachers enjoy, or, rewards special attributes by giving posts of responsibility. The lack of appropriate in service training for most NNEBs makes this lack of career structure even more keenly felt. Opportunities, which are developing in some enlightened higher education institutions, for NNEBs to progress to a degree in Early Childhood studies offer a hope for the future. Such initiatives in career structure and in training do increase feelings of self worth, allow for due recognition to be given and expertise to be acknowledged. A Nursery Nurse of many years experience makes this point,

I would welcome the opportunity for Nursery Nurses to become promoted to a senior position in the nursery, an opportunity which exists in some regions. Giving the Nursery Nurse more responsibility and authority in the running of the nursery. If such a position as Senior Nursery Nurse were to exist it would give a Nursery Nurse more initiative. I feel that a Nursery Nurse has no promotion available after gaining years of experience. If, however a senior position were available it would allow the job to progress further.

Document: 3\_15 pb2

The nature of the NNEBs grievances were also apparent from the analysis of the nature of the educative experiences of the cohort group, as we shall see at the conclusion of the next section.

#### **6.4.5 Type and Range of Experience**

Respondents were asked to give an account of the type of experiences they had had working with children (PBQ, Item3). Their responses were classified, using NUD.IST, into four categories to assess their 'hermetic' nature, that is, how closed their careers as educators had been to experiences working with children in either different age phases or different sectors. Those, whose professional biography revealed that their experiences were limited to the same sector and age range in which they were currently working, could be perceived as 'hermetic'. Those who had worked in the same sector but with a different age range (for example, a teacher who had worked in state education with secondary and nursery children) and those who had worked with the same age but in a different sector (for example, an NNEB who had worked with young children in a Social Services and an LEA nursery), were seen as less 'hermetic'. Those who had worked with both different ages and different sectors were the least 'hermetic'. The practitioners' responses were distributed amongst these four categories according to their self-described career.

Figure 28 shows how types of experience are distributed by educator role type as a percentage of the total number of that role type. The majority of adults (118 out of 169: 70%) who work in early childhood settings are totally 'hermetic' in that they have always worked with the same age range and in the same sector. There are, however, some interesting differences between the sectors and

between the different role types within the sectors. Playgroup Leaders are the most 'hermetic' in that, of the 26 in this study, none (100%) had either worked in centre based settings outside their voluntary sector or with children of an older age phase. They tended to emphasise their role as parents as a central element of their experience. The length of their experience as Leaders, which we will consider later, appeared to be related to these parental responsibilities and I suspect there is a correlation between size of family and Leadership experience. The larger one's family, the longer one seems to be involved with the playgroup movement and the more likely, over time, one is to become a Leader.

I am a mother of 3 children under 10 years. Have done childminding and have been involved in Playgroup for 3 years. I covered as Leader when leader left and was offered the opportunity of leading my own group 5 months ago.

PLA Leader Northern England 6\_06 pb3

13 years as a mother, I have 3 children. 4 years experience in playgroup. I have done a lot of baby sitting from the ages of 15 to 18 years.

PLA Leader Northern Ireland 4\_13 pb2

Another NIPPA Leader in Northern Ireland shows that experiences can be varied even whilst remaining within one sector.

20 years as a Mother, 5 years as a Childminder, 6 years as a Leader at Mother and Toddlers, 3 years as a Leader at Playgroup.

Document: 4\_12 pb2

**Figure 28: Range of Experience by Role Type**

	Same age Same Sector		Same age Different Sector		Different Age Same Sector		Different Age Differ. Sector	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>PLA:</b>	<b>42/44</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>1/44</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1/44</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0/44</b>	<b>0</b>
Leader	26/26	100	0/26	0	0/26	0	0/26	0
Asst.	16/18	89	1/18	5	1/18	5	0/18	0
<b>Teachers</b>	<b>37/63</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>9/63</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11/63</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6/63</b>	<b>10</b>
HT	2/6	33	2/6	33	1/6	17	1/6	17
DH	2/3	67	1/3	33	0/3	0	0/3	0
Coord.	3/13	23	3/13	23	4/13	31	3/13	23
Class	30/41	73	3/41	7	6/41	15	2/41	5
<b>NNEBs</b>	<b>26/45</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>19/45</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>0/45</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0/45</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>NTAs</b>	<b>13/17</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>3/17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1/17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0/17</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>% of Total Adults:</b>	<b>[118/169 70%]</b>		<b>[32/169 19%]</b>		<b>[13/169 8%]</b>		<b>[6/169 3%]</b>	

(n=169)

These next two Playgroup Leaders from the North of England have a similar profile,

Parent of 3 children. Committee member and treasurer of Mother and Toddler group Committee member and rota mum of Playgroup, Assistant - then becoming Leader of a Playgroup

Document: 6\_07 pb1

I am a mother of 3 children under 10 years. Have done childminding and have been involved in Playgroup for 3 years.



I covered as Leader when leader left and was offered the opportunity of leading my own group 5 months ago.

Document: 6\_06 pb3

Assistants in the playgroups appear to have fewer children or were more likely to have had wider experience. This assistant had worked in playgroups in Northern Ireland and London.

Playgroup Assistant for 3 years in London. Playgroup Leader for 3 years in London Playgroup Leader for 5 years in Dungannon. Playgroup assistant for 5 years here.

Asst. Playgroup, N.Ireland 4\_12 pb1

Career patterns for Urban and London based PLA Assistants show more evidence of career breaks and generally they had shorter lengths of time in the voluntary sector. This London PLA Assistant had a wider range of experiences and, clearly, has a wider concept of her roles than simply 'mother',

Office Administrator, PA to MD and Translator / interpreter for 7 years. Within the playgroup I have been a Rota Mum / regular helper for 5 years, Chair person for 4 years, Relief Supervisor for 1 year and Playgroup Assistant for 2 years.

Document 6\_02 pb1

This PLA Assistant had worked as a volunteer in schools, the only PLA employee to have worked in the education sector in this cohort,

Family - 3 children. Running toddler group - 5 years. Playgroup committee. Brownies - 7 years. Voluntary NTA in local school for 3 years. Youth club helper

Document: 6\_01 pb1

Other PLA Assistants have much shorter lengths of involvement,

2 children of my own. Family/friends children. This playgroup since November 1993.

London, Asst.PLA, Document 5\_12pb2

I have 2 children aged 6 and 7. I have been working in the playgroup for 8 months

London Asst.PLA, Document 5\_12 pb3

Figure 28 also shows that the majority of class teachers (30 out of 41, 73%) are 'hermetic' although not as monolithic as PLA workers (89%). As with PLA Assistants, many are fairly new appointments whose relatively short careers may well diversify later, but many are also very long serving. Two examples will illustrate,

I am now in my second year of teaching. I also taught Reception last year at the same school.

Metropolitan Midlands, Class teacher Document : 2\_08 pb1

21 years experience working with 4 to 7 year old children in an Infant School situation.

Welsh Rural, class teacher: Document :7\_05 pb1

The stereotype of the traditional infant teacher who had remained in the same post all of her career was, however, not confirmed. Those class teacher's with longer experience were more likely to have had a range of experiences, even if those experiences were all within the same sector and the same age range, 0-8 years.

I have been teaching in early years settings since 1977 to date, (19 years) this includes large Nursery Units to smaller 26 place part-time units. Reception classes (4-5 years). Teacher in charge of a 26 place nursery for 10 years before developing the Early Years Unit at this school.

Welsh Urban7\_01 pb2

Other class teachers had gained wider experience as supply teachers, often when raising their own family.

I have always worked with young children (3-7 yrs).10 years at a Primary School. Daily supply - worked in numerous schools

for 3 years

Teacher in a Nursery School Document: 2\_11 pb1

Class teachers were also more likely to have worked outside the sector (3 adults out of 41, 7%), or outside the sector and the age range (2 out of 41, 5%), than colleagues in the PLA. Class teachers were even more likely to have worked with a different age range, i.e. outside 0-8 years (6 adults out of 41, 15%). Mostly these were teachers who had taught later primary years but at least 2 teachers had taught at secondary level before a career break, as this example shows,

2 years in secondary school, 14 years in primary school, 2 years in adult evening classes.

Reception Class teacher Document: 4\_04 pb1

The acceptance of secondary trained teachers into early years' settings does not occur in Scotland where appointment is dependent upon appropriate age phase training. It was also evident that some teachers, who had trained for a younger age phase, had used their expertise in beginning literacy skills to teach older children who had language difficulties.

I taught for seven years as a reception class teacher in a Primary School. Then I did supply teaching in Primary Schools (mainly Infant and Nursery and some Junior) I also did supply teaching in Special Needs classes in Secondary Schools.

Class teacher, Nursery School, Document: 7\_10 pb5

4 years Primary 2 in P1 and 2 in P2. 2 years Secondary forms 1 and 3 (Nigeria). 17 years in Nursery. Several years as an evening volunteer and tutor in Adult Literacy.

Early Years Coordinator, Nursery Class, Document: 4\_07 pb1

Altogether, more than one in four teachers (11 adults out of 41, 27%) were not

'hermetic' to some degree. Some had worked in Playgroups. In fact, 17 adults (2 headteachers, 1 deputy, 2 coordinators, 1 teacher, 9 NNEBs and 3 NTAs) currently working in the early childhood educational settings had previously worked in playgroup settings. Three career biographies from a Headteacher in a Nursery School, a Deputy Headteacher in a Nursery School and a Reception teacher, each from a different regional provider, illustrate this point,

Primary teacher (Infants) for 4 years. Part-time at Nursery for 4 years. I am also a mother of 2 young children and helped out at playgroup

Head teacher, Nursery School, Document: 3\_12 pb1

Taught for 12 years mainly in Infant Schools with younger children YR and Y1. For the last 4 years I have taught in the above Nursery School. Further to this I have 2 young children and have been involved with various playgroups through them.

Deputy head, Nursery School, Document: 8\_06 pb4

2 years and 1 term in an infant school (Y1/Y2 and reception), 1 year 2 terms in a First School (Y2), several years as a Playgroup Helper, 1 year 2 terms as a part time reception to Y3 - Health Education, 2 years in a first school (Y3 and Y2), 2 years in Reception.

Teacher, Reception Class; Document: 2\_04 pb3

The least 'hermetic' groups amongst teachers tended to be in managerial positions, Headteachers, Deputy Headteachers and Coordinators. Nearly half of this group had some experience outside the age range or outside the sector or both. Coordinators (and Scottish Senior Teachers) were the least 'hermetic' of all role types (only 2 adults out of 13, 15%) with 85% of this section of the cohort having had wider experiences. It is interesting to speculate why managerial appointment should correlate with width of experience. Does the challenge of these wider experiences make these individual more confident

and/or competent and therefore more attractive to appointment panels; or is it that the individual who has the confidence to do different things and the drive to keep some form of work going, even during a career break, for example, display the kinds of energies that will eventually lead to management positions? Whatever, many people in early childhood education settings have crossed the sector and age divisions. Given the increasing emphasis in Government policy to move towards more integration between sectors, it would seem that schools by nature of their staff's more varied experience, are in a better position to initiate, coordinate and manage that process than the less widely experienced playgroup movement.

Of all the role types in the cohort, the NNEBs showed the least 'hermetic' characteristics and the greatest diversity in their career patterns. More than half the NNEBs responses (26 adults out of 45, 58%) indicated that they had always worked in the same sector and with the same age range. Perhaps, unsurprisingly, none had moved outside the age range but 42% (19 out of 45) had worked in sectors other than the education sector, where all were currently employed. In part, this switching might be explained by the way many felt their careers were blocked, as was made evident in the previous section. Diversity, moving across sectors but never, at least in this study, across age phase, was one means of creating a more varied career, especially when the NNEB had been qualified for some length of time. Some examples show that NNEBs work in Social Services, Health, Playgroups and schools.

I have spent fifteen years working with young children and their families since obtaining my NNEB. Five years spent as a Nursery Officer at a City Day Nursery. Four years as a Childminder. Two and a half years as a Playgroup leader. Supply work at different schools as a Classroom Assistant and occasional crèche work.

NNEB, Reception Class: 2\_06 pb2

2 years as Nursery Assistant at local school Nanny for 1 year in

Nigeria (looking after 3 children under 6 years) 3 years Nursery Nurse training. 6 years working in Nursery School Whilst bringing up a family of 3, worked as relief Nursery Nurse At present in my 6th year as Nursery Nurse at this Nursery School

NNEB, Nursery Class: 3\_15 pb2

1 year as an NNEB student in a residential nursery. 1 year as an NNEB student in a day nursery. 1 year as an NNEB student in a Nursery School. 2 1/2 years as a staff nurse in a residential nursery. 1 1/2 years as a nursery nurse in a maternity hospital. 23 years working as a nursery nurse in my present job in this nursery school

NNEB, Nursery School, Document: 3\_12 pb4

Another characteristic of NNEBs careers, apart from diversity between sectors, was the length of time. This was very starkly illustrated, perhaps with some resignation, by a NNEB in a Nursery Class who simply wrote, in answer to the question, 'What experience do you have?',

30 years spent in Nursery Education.

NNEB, Nursery Class, 7\_19 pb1

I will explore the differing patterns in length of service in the next section but wish to close this section with an exploration of the type of experience that Non Teaching Assistants (NTAs) detailed in their responses. NTAs in educational settings take many forms; some, for example, being a cheaper replacement for NNEBs in school class rooms, some being ethnic language assistants and some working as extra support for children with special needs. There was no career structure and very little training on offer, in any of the regional providers in the study something the NTAs allude to when asked "What would help you?" (pbq.Item 7).

It would help me to have available different courses to confirm and develop what I have already learnt over the years as a nursery assistant and to give me paper qualifications.

Nursery Assistant, Nursery School, N.Ireland, Document: 4\_01 pb7  
There seems to be no reason why assistants in educational settings should not have had at least the development opportunities open to PLA Assistants. Undoubtedly, the new Support Teacher Assistant courses will address this issue. Some of these NTAs clearly have much to offer, as this biographical extract makes apparent,

8 years experience with pre-school children in playgroups as an assistant and later a Supervisor - eventually owning my own Playgroup. Also working for the past year as a Classroom/Welfare Assistant - working mainly with children aged 4,5 and 6.

NTA, Reception Class; Document: 8\_19 pb1

#### **6.4.6 Length of Experience**

Participating practitioners were also given an open ended question requesting information about their experience (pbq.Item 3). Responses to this question usually, though not always, gave length of experience as well as type. These responses are recorded in Figure 29. The figures show that numbers for teachers and playgroup assistants with continuing length of service decrease rapidly once these adults have worked in their sector for 5 years. This is explainable in the case of teachers, many of whom will leave teaching to begin their own families within about five years of their first appointment. Later, many of these will return to the profession and help to sustain the apparent longevity of service, so that numbers of those with 5-15 years service are maintained and those with more than 15 years service (8) are greater than those with less than 2 years service (5). Most of the paid Playgroup Assistants, however, appear to already have a young family and their pattern of employment is different, rapidly declining after 5 years and then slowly petering out, even for paid staff, over the following ten years. NTAs in schools, who might be thought of as fulfilling a

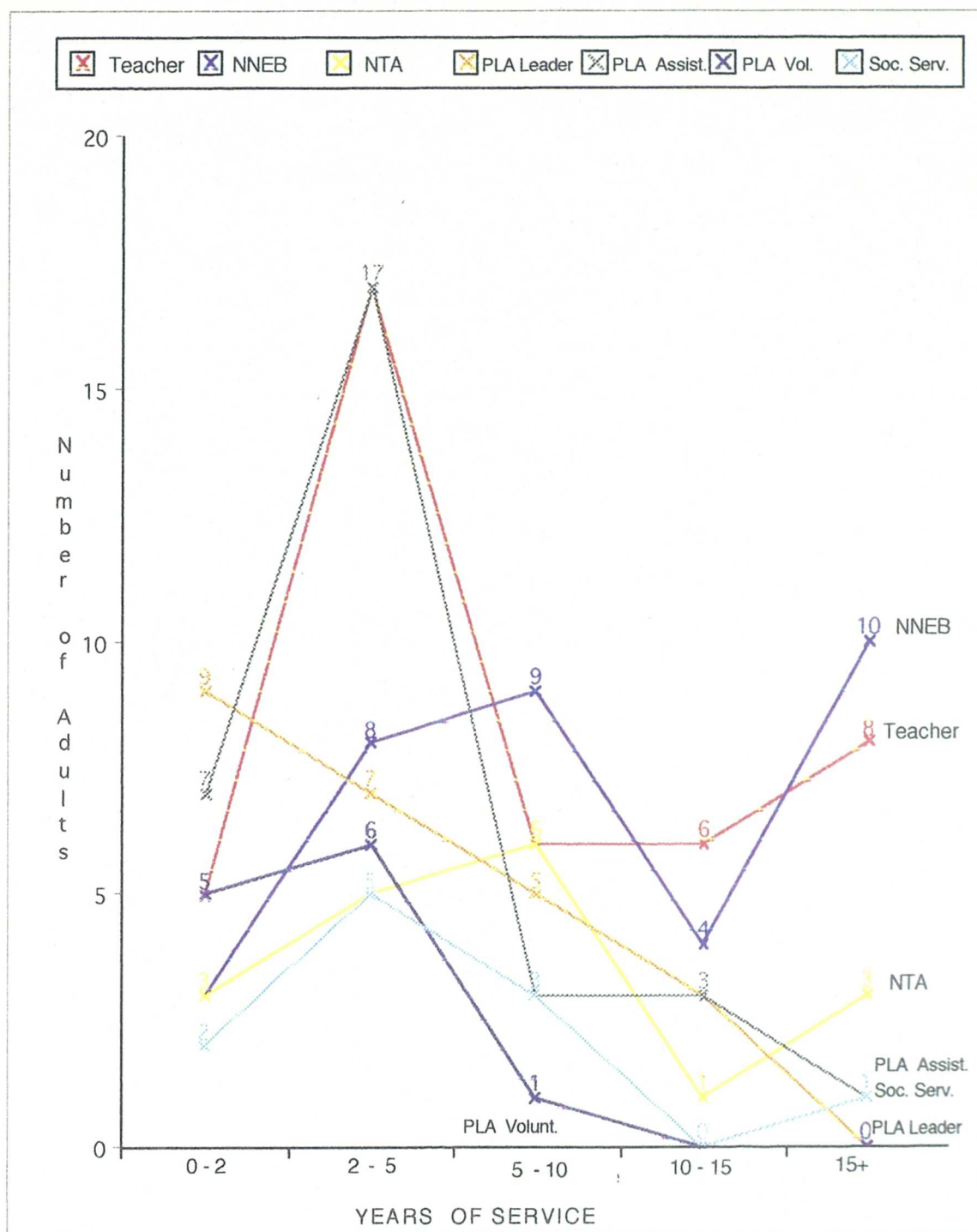
**Figure 29: Distribution of Reported Length of Experience by Role**

	No. of Years 0-2	2-5	5-10	10-15	15+
<b>Teachers:</b>	5	17	6	6	8
<b>NNEB:</b>	3	8	9	4	10
<b>NTA:</b>	3	5	6	1	3
<b>PLA Leaders:</b>	9	7	5	3	0
<b>PLA Paid Ass:</b>	7	17	3	3	1
<b>PLA Vol. Help:</b>	5	6	1	0	0
<b>Soc. Services</b>	2	5	3	0	1

declining after 5 years and then slowly petering out, even for paid staff, over the following ten years. NTAs in schools, who might be thought of as fulfilling a comparable role to PLA Assistants, sustain their employment within their sector for much longer. In fact, three of the NTAs, out of the seventeen in this study, had also worked previously in PLA settings, transferring to education settings once their children had reached school age. In one sense the PLA experience had given them a training for their future longer term work in education.

PLA Leaders also show a pattern of steady decline with none recording service beyond 15 years. The relative short period of sector loyalty in the PLA settings has implications for policy. If turnover of staff is comparatively high, then





**Figure 30: Patterns of Length of Experience by Role Type**

attempts at quality improvement should perhaps be focused on enhancing setting development rather than simply investing in developing individual staff. If a setting can establish rigorous and systematic, self-evaluating quality assessment procedures and measures, these structures can help new staff be inducted into the existing process. Measures to develop effectiveness which focus exclusively on individual staff may be successful, but may be nullified when the staff member leaves. In settings with high short term turnover of staff, therefore, investment in models of evaluation which focus on the whole setting may be more effective and less costly than those only developing staff.

Figure 30 also offers confirmation of the lack of acknowledgement for NNEB and equivalent staff in educational settings. Their pattern of employment is sustained over time, with greater numbers (10) than all other role types staying on beyond 15 years. The number of long serving NNEBs peaks later (between 5 and 10 years of service) and the subsequent drop is much less dramatic than with other types of early childhood educator. They remain in service longer, being the only group who have a greater number still serving after 15 years than were between 2 to 5 years. Put simply, this means that NNEBs are the most loyal and the longest serving. The only route for NNEBs seeking new challenges is to change sector. It seems unfortunate that their loyalty to the education sector is so poorly acknowledged. Despite their academic qualifications and their commitment, they have little opportunity to develop a progressive career which enhances responsibility and status, little opportunity to benefit from a remunerative strategy which would reward experience, and little opportunity for access to professional development.

#### **6.4.7 Level of Qualification.**

Figure 31, overleaf, shows the patterns of qualification of the cohort expressed as a percentage of the total (169). The Nursery Nurse qualification, either at Diploma or Education Board level, or its Scottish equivalent is the most commonly held qualification in the cohort, (26.4%; 45/169). There were no NNEBs in this cohort who held the advanced level qualification for NNEBs, which is not generally accessible, geographically or practically to many NNEBs.

Those holding Qualified Teaching Status (QTS) in all its various forms represented 46% of the total. As is common in the UK (excluding Scotland), these teachers came from a variety of teacher education backgrounds. Those who had a specific training in Early Years/ Primary education were the largest part (36.6%) and those who were secondary trained, or specified 'later years' comprised 9.4% (16/169). The former group were divided fairly equally between those who held a Post Graduate Certificate of Education with an early years focus (PGCE.E:12.4 %; 21/169), those who held a Bachelor of Education with an early years focus (BEEdE: 12.4; 21/169) and those who had a Certificate of Education with an early years focus (Cert.E:11.8; 20/169). Included in the PGCE group were those who had had a variety of non-National Curriculum first degrees. This example is from a Nursery Teacher in her second year in an urban Nursery Class,

MA (Hons) Psychology, PGCE (Primary), Diploma for Graduate Secretaries

Document:3\_14, pb.4

and this is from the professional biography of an inner city, reception teacher with 20 years teaching experience, only the last four of which have been in the

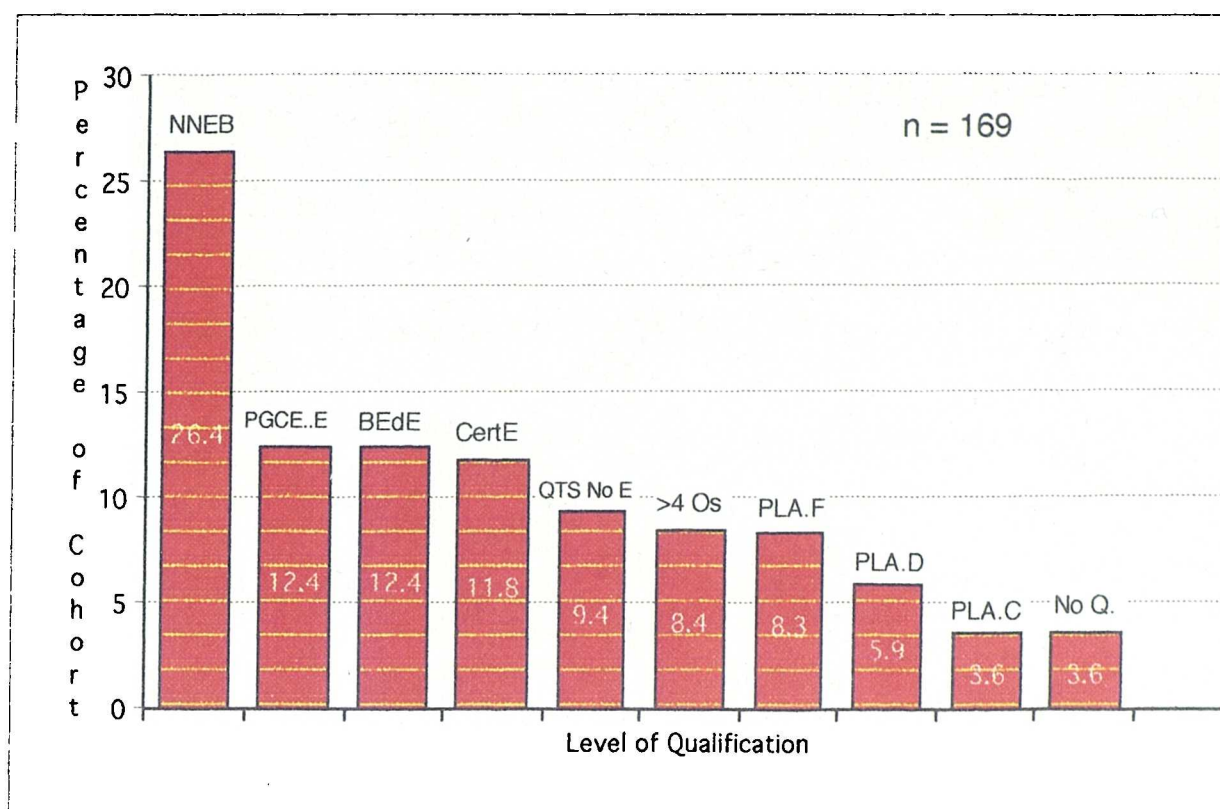
'infant department',

BPhil, Psychology of Childhood, DBA.

Document: 2\_08,pb 3

I am not claiming these as typical; indeed, they are exceptional, but they do confront some stereotypes about early childhood teachers and show some of the richness in their backgrounds, especially those who have had PGCE training. An analysis of the BEd(E) teachers' biographies indicated that they tended to have more conforming backgrounds and were more likely to have gone from school to college and returned to school. Their strength was that they had four years of training specific to the early years and some grounding in developmental and learning theory. PGCE teachers often had little initial training on theoretical aspects of their work. Most PGCE graduates had less than 18 weeks contact time and much of that time had been devoted to curriculum matters rather than issues specifically related to young children's education, such as play, for example. Certificated teachers with an early years specialism (Cert.E) tended to be older and more experienced than BEd(E) or PGCE (E) colleagues. Some had trained for only two years under provisions for married women teachers introduced during the recruitment emergency of the early 1970s. No doubt their numbers will steadily fall, if the profession continues to recruit only graduate trainees.

Those who had QTS status but no specific early years training (QTS,No E) represented nearly one in ten of the teaching cohort. If the ten Scottish teachers are removed from the total number of teachers in the cohort (56), no Scottish teacher being allowed to teach an age range for which they were not trained, then 16 of the 46 remaining teachers (34%) were trained for another age . The



**Figure 31: Patterns of Qualification**

implication is that one in three teachers of young children are secondary trained in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This confirms previous findings by others (Pascal,1989; Blenkin,1996) that show the prevalence of 'Secondary returners', that is, teachers trained in other age ranges who become interested in early childhood during a career break to raise their own children. Five of these teachers in this group in this study were Certificated Secondary teachers, eight were BEd.s at Secondary or Middle or Later Juniors level, and 3 were Secondary PGCEs. However good these former secondary teachers may be with young children, it would seem they could be even better with appropriate and adequate training. The evidence of their professional biographies and interviews indicated that the early childhood professional development opportunities that have been available to them, or to which they have had access, or which they have attended,

have been few. There are many early childhood educators who have few qualifications (8.4% of this cohort had less than 4 GCSEs) and some who have none (3.6% of this sample). The advent of GNVQs and the development of assessors in the workplace might be seen as one means of addressing this, but the present system is open to abuse both by unscrupulous employers, by further education colleges desperate to maintain numbers, by politicians eager to manipulate the jobless figures and by the acquiescent pragmatism of the students who get some marginal economic benefit from conforming with the system. During my period of study, I tutored a research student, a lecturer from a local college who had been asked to set up such a scheme (Research Diary, March 15 1996). Her story may or may not be typical but her study did reveal the potential for abuse and the inadequacies of some of the process. I have a strong personal commitment to open access and I feel that bringing people back into education is something to which we should all be committed. The opportunities for adult education, which the close contact between educators and the children's parents or carers in their children's first setting provides, should be encouraged. Examples of the power of this can be seen in Pen Green or in Reggio Emilia (Whalley, 1995; Katz, 1995) but the evidence from interviews and questionnaire in this study suggests the former attempts of the TECs and the present GNVQ initiative have yet to prove universally convincing. Certainly those without qualification in this cohort showed little enthusiasm for such measures. Many of these workers were outside the state sector, although the fairly low level of qualification of many NTAs in the state education sector was apparent too. Few LEAs seem willing to provide courses for NTAs who, as we have seen, were generally very committed to professional development. No

doubt the new STA initiative will address some of this, but at the time of the data collection this was not yet available. Many of the less well qualified were within the former Playgroup movement.

The Preschool Learning Alliance (PLA), itself, has been very successful in developing and offering a nationally coordinated series of inservice qualifications to its staff. The effect of this is seen by those involved in PLA settings who had already achieved some level of qualification under their training programme. Of the 44 PLA educators in this study, 30 had achieved a PLA qualification; 10 (all Leaders) had a PLA Diploma, 6 held a PLA Certificate and 14 attend a PLA Foundation course.

In spite of evidence from some teachers' biographies that they had worked in playgroups during career breaks, there were none amongst the 44 PLA in this cohort, perhaps another indication of changing times. There were, however, 2 PLA educators who recorded degree level qualifications. As holders of this level of qualification they are not typical of PLA workers, generally, but their backgrounds do provide illustration of the variety of personnel and circumstances within the PLA movement. One worked in an urban multi-ethnic community in London and was a Play Leader/Administrator. She listed her qualifications thus,

PPA Foundation Certificate, First Aid Certificate, Portage and  
Makaton Certificates, BA in English, Hindi, Economics and  
Political Science, Madras

Document: 5\_09, pb1

She had worked for 11 years with preschool children and her needs were, 'for the buildings to have the graffiti removed', and for more pay; 'if my wages were

improved I would feel more valued'. She became an early childhood educator 'because it fitted in with family life' and she expressed little interest in further training.

The other graduate level PLA worker was a playgroup supervisor working in, what she described as, 'a safe happy environment' in a rural community in the North of England. She had been a 'rota mum' for 5 years. She listed her qualifications as,

6 'O' levels, 2 'A' levels, Post Graduate Bilingual and Secretarial Diploma, Member of the Institute of Linguists, Diploma in Playgroup practice.

Document: 6\_02,pb1

She had been drawn into the PLA because,

Having been involved with a playgroup with my own children and finding not only their learning experiences and development rewarding and interesting, but that of the other children, I wished to continue working in this type of environment

Document: 6\_02, pb1

She was keen to turn this into a career and valued further training,

I see my job as progressing in terms of increasing and developing experience, ability and skills through further training. The strength of the playgroups is their informal, family setting. However, there is a requirement for more advanced training akin to nursery teachers: the first five years are vital to learning and yet children are often experiencing a less skilled environment. It would help me to have a financed, family friendly and flexible modular educational programme (not NNEB/BTec) but something more teacher based

Document: 6\_02, pb1

One wonders if the PLA were to attempt to develop qualifications for staff at



nursery teacher level how this might be afforded; by the playgroups in terms of meeting the demand for commensurate salaries which would follow; by the Government which essentially wants cheap effective care; or by the educator who presently is asked to sustain the costs of training in time and money. Even if these staff training difficulties were overcome, would the environment of some settings be still as inadequate as her London colleague's description implied.

One of the few things that the Northern PLA leader had in common with her London based colleague were the problems of accessing training. Most PLA workers had very real difficulties with off site training, and this became apparent during the initial training period of the EEL Project, as my research journal recorded (November 22, 1994). Many, of course, had young children also involved in their playgroup, and the management of the care of their own children was an understandable issue, particularly when the playgroup might only be open for 2 hours three mornings a week. Finance was also an issue and many had to find fees, travel and care costs from their own resources. Many local authorities seemed ambivalent about playgroups, and tensions increased when their national executive changed their organisation's name and supported the government's voucher initiative. During the course of this study, some LEAs withdrew money from regional PLA organisations, as they came to view them as competitors rather than colleagues. In discussions and interviews with PLA staff at grassroots level, recorded in my research log (various dates, February to June 1995), it was more than once explained to me that decisions taken centrally by the executive in London had been difficult for the regions. Some were resentful that their organisation seemed to be turning itself into something that it was not created to be. Some PLA staff were particularly

resentful about being told to do things, including training, for which they had neither the time or the inclination. Many saw the playgroup as a desperate answer to their childcare problems and their need for personal space. They were wary that it was now beginning to make more demands on them. Some were resentful that 'play' was being replaced by 'preschool learning' and how this would be interpreted. The PLA is a very broad church and is far more diverse than other major providers. Some PLA settings open all day and charge fees which in effect make them almost private day care nurseries. Others, especially in rural areas, operate minimally with 'rota mums' and are open for as little as six hours a week. It was the latter group, those closest to the PLAs original concept, who seemed most resentful of the changes. This is unfortunate as the PLA has a very necessary role to play, particularly in rural areas, and particularly in the provision of the 'wrap around', extended care that families and children in modern societies need.

#### **7.4.8 Motivation in Early Childhood Educators**

The Professional Biography Questionnaire asked the open ended question 'Why did you become an early childhood educator?' (pb 5). Responses to this question were classified and codified using NUD.IST. The frequency of the categories of response are tabulated by role type in Figure 32 over leaf. Although there were 169 respondents, their answers frequently would cover more than one category and could be recorded more than once. The percentages under the the role type headings are expressed as a percentage of the total number of adults in that particular role, not as a percentage of the overall responses. This allows comparisons across role type to be validly made. They are highlighted in **bold** in the table.

**Figure 32: Responses by role type to pb.5; 'Why did you become an early childhood educator?'**

Categorised Response	Overall Items %	PLA Staff Leader	% Assistant	Teaching Staff Heads	Deputy	Coord.	Class	NNEB [%]	NTA [%]																														
	169 [100]																																						
Likes Children	91 [54]	28/44 15	[62] 13	4	2	33/63 10	[52] 17	18/45[40]	12/17[71]																														
Likes them Learning	66 [39]	16/44 7	[36] 9	3	1	28/63 4	[44] 20	15/45[33]	7/17[41]																														
Job Satis.	33 [20]	7/44 4	[16] 3	2	1	14/63 5	[22] 6	8/45[18]	4/17[24]																														
Fits in	33 [20]	18/44 11	[41] 7	2	0	10/63 4	[16] 4	1/45 [2]	3/17[18]																														
Early Ambition	27 [16]	4/44 1	[9] 3	1	2	14/63 3	[22] 8	8/45 [18]	1/17[6]																														
Early Involve. with children	27 [16]	4/44 2	[9] 2	1	0	9/63 4	[14] 4	11/45 [24]	3/17[18]																														
Likes social devel. of ch.	9 [5]	3/44 1	[7] 2	0	0	2/63 0	[3] 2	4/45 [9]	0/17[0]																														
Psychological Need	7 [4]	1/44 1	[2] 0	0	1	3/63 0	[5] 2	2/45 [4]	0/17[0]																														
Professional Development	6 [4]	0/44 0	[0] 0	0	1	3/63 0	[5] 2	3/45 [7]	1/17[6]																														
<table> <tr> <td></td><td>PLA</td><td></td><td></td><td>Teachers</td><td></td><td>NNEB</td><td>NTA</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>Ldr</td><td>Ass.</td><td>HT</td><td>DH</td><td>Coord.</td><td>Tea.</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Cohort Numbers</td><td>[26</td><td>+ 18 = 44]</td><td>[6</td><td>+ 3</td><td>+ 13</td><td>+ 41=63]</td><td>[45]</td><td>[17]</td><td>(n=169)</td></tr> </table>											PLA			Teachers		NNEB	NTA				Ldr	Ass.	HT	DH	Coord.	Tea.				Cohort Numbers	[26	+ 18 = 44]	[6	+ 3	+ 13	+ 41=63]	[45]	[17]	(n=169)
	PLA			Teachers		NNEB	NTA																																
	Ldr	Ass.	HT	DH	Coord.	Tea.																																	
Cohort Numbers	[26	+ 18 = 44]	[6	+ 3	+ 13	+ 41=63]	[45]	[17]	(n=169)																														

In confirmation of the discussion in the earlier part of this chapter, when the text analysis showed the very positive view practitioners in this field have of their work and the analysis of attitudes to promotion showed how early childhood workers are loathe to leave the classroom, the overwhelming response to this

question on motivation was an affective and emotional one. These adults simply liked children of this age and were drawn to interacting with them. This was by far the single most frequently declared motivating factor (91 retrievals out of 169 documents; 54%) and it crossed the sectors and the role types. There was a slight difference between NNEB (40%) and teachers (52%) on the one hand and the generally less well trained PLA (62%) and the NTAs (71%) on the other. The suggestion that differences in levels of response to this question are related to professionalism or training rather than any potential differences between sectors is implied by the frequency of the NTA responses in this category. All the NTAs and NNEBs in this study worked in the state education sector in reception classes, or in nursery schools or classes, so training rather than setting seems to be the controlling variable.

The central importance of the deep emotional commitment most early childhood educators have to their work is evidenced in the texts. A Scottish NTA says,

'I became an early childhood educator as I love being in the presence of children'

Document; 3-06, pb1

A coordinator in a family centre says,

'I became an early childhood educator because of my love of children from an early age'.

Document; 3-20, pb1

A playgroup leader in Northern Ireland says,

I love being around children of this age

Document;4\_13, pb2

A headteacher says,

I believe it was the special qualities that I found working alongside young children that attracted me to specialise in early childhood education

Document;4\_08,pb2

This close identifying with the children, this open joy in their presence, this bonding and affection must be unique, at least in its universality and intensity, to early years educators. It does not seem to be expressed in later years so readily, although undoubtedly teachers of older children have a sense of vocation and job satisfaction, too. It is expressed, most often, not as a need within the children for care but as a need within the adult to be caring and educating and to be part of a community of children. It is the bedrock of the commitment to their work and is matched by an emotional sensitivity to the child's needs as we shall see later when examining the results of the observation studies. It is entirely appropriate that educators appreciate that the child's emotional well being must be addressed first. What is important in this is: that this necessary concern for children and joy in their presence is set in a professional context and does not degenerate into mere sentimental indulgence. The adults' professional well being and professional self image can and should include a view of herself as caring practitioner but it must go beyond that to include competence, reflection and informed judgments.

The second most commonly identified motivating factor, (39%; 66 out of 169; see Figure 32) and again confirmed by all of the differing types of practitioners, was expressed as the pleasure of being a part of children's learning and development. Most practitioners got real job satisfaction from being able to

observe children's development. This category of response focused on the satisfaction obtained by participating in educative interactions with their children. A PLA assistant in Northern Ireland said,

I feel a great pleasure in seeing them achieve things they haven't done before, in listening to them and watching them play, in helping them build confidence, in helping them to develop their abilities.

Document: 5-12 pb2

A Welsh NNEB wrote,

I became an early childhood educator because I thoroughly enjoy working with children and spending time with them, to see them develop. I enjoy seeing them learning and finding out about themselves and the environment around them.

Document: 2-01 pb3

An NTA in an urban community reception class said,

I became an early childhood educator because I enjoy working with young children and especially helping ethnic minority children develop a second language and confidence

Document: 2-07, pb2

A Headteacher in a Scottish Private Day Nursery describes a special world of wonderment,

I like the mix of care and education that is involved in looking after young children and believe that it is only before they go to school that you have a chance to truly educate children before they enter the Primary school world of passing tests and being constantly compared to other children. I like the openness of young children and find their enquiring minds very stimulating and challenging

Document: 4\_08pb2

These responses reveal an attitude that goes beyond simply caring for the

children and satisfying one's own desire to care. These practitioners get satisfaction from participating and observing in the children's development, a satisfaction which, in fact, is often linked inextricably with their notion of care. This difference might be one of the crucial aspects of adult effectiveness in early childhood settings. This attitude was found across sectors and role types, although it was generally more common in workers in educational settings (teachers of all types, 28/63, 44%; NTAs, 7/17, 41%) than in PLA settings (16/44, 36%). The attitude was most common amongst 'class' teachers with no management responsibility (20/41, 49%) who were the only group to score this response category more frequently than the response category 'like children' (17/41, 41%). A final interesting aspect of this category, and the previous one, is that although they were also first and second ranked choices for NNEBs, they rated both of them less frequently than any other role groups ('likes children', 18/45, 40%; 'likes them learning', 15/45, 33%). The ranking of responses for NNEBs was different in a number of other categories, as we shall see later.

It is beyond this exploratory, ground mapping study to look at how differences in attitude in the perceived nature of the work might impact on effectiveness as educators. Part of the role for this study is to feed back into the development of the larger EEL Project and indicate future areas for exploration. It may be possible, within the data bank available to EEL to track the Engagement observation scores of adults and the Involvement observation scores for their children, to see if this can be related to motivational attitudes in the adults.

The third ranked category was 'job satisfaction'. Respondents in this category

spoke of rewards, challenges and fulfilment of the job. An NNEB, for example, said,

I became an early childhood educator because working with young children is very rewarding and stimulating. I enjoy the responsibility of playing such an important role in early childhood education.

Document: 2\_17 pb1

a PLA Assistant said,

I worked in an office situation all my life. I thought I would like to get work satisfaction with a career with children, which I do.

Document:4\_11pb1

another PLA Leader said,

I felt it was a worthwhile job

Document: 5\_09pb1

This category had an overall response of 33 retrievals in 169 documents (20%) but the majority were in the education sector (teachers 22%, NNEBs 18% and NTAs 24%). The percentage of PLA staff response in this category was less at 16%, perhaps an indication of some difference in perception of their role.

Of the 169 adults in the cohort, 33 (20%) thought that their reason for doing the job was related to the fact that it 'fitted in' with their lives and was a pragmatic solution to their circumstances (see Figure 32). There were real differences between role groups in this category. This category was the second rank category for PLA workers (18/44; 41%) and was substantially more frequently recorded by them than by teachers (10/63; 16%), NTAs (3/17;18%) and especially NNEBs only one of whom mentioned this as a factor in her choice of occupation.



A PLA assistant said,

As I had children of my own it seemed a natural progression to become an early childhood educator and the holidays fit in with my children's schooling.

Document: 5\_03 pb1

A NNEB said,

I became an early educator initially because I had two children and my first priority was to be able to work school hours and have school holidays with them.

Document: 7\_05,pb1

A Headteacher in a Nursery School said,

I became an early childhood educator because my daughter could only gain access to playgroup if I went along to help - they were desperately short staffed. So I worked in the playgroup for two years. I became interested in very young children and was then encouraged to become a supply teacher in her Nursery. I have been very lucky and had people to encourage me throughout my career in early years.

Document: 7\_10, pb4

Clearly, whatever the needs of the individual at the starting point of a career, circumstances can change. Motivation must come in a variety of guises, but there must be a doubt concerning the degree of commitment of adults for whom the choice of job was based on necessity. What the relatively high response to this category reveals more than anything else is the paucity and lack of choice for women who wish to continue to work. That most early childhood educators are women, many of whom have their responsibility for the care of their own young families, means that this category of response was relatively frequent. Indeed, the fact that many nurseries set up in the early 1970's were designated 'teacher's nurseries' to ensure that schools could recruit women returners

shows this problem has been with us for some time, even if, in fact, teachers choosing this response category were relatively few.

If there were those who chose the job for immediate and pressing pragmatic reasons, there were an almost equal number (27/169; 16%) who had harboured a longstanding, deep seated, early ambition to be involved with young children. Foremost in this group were teachers (14/63; 22%) and Nursery Nurses (8/45, 18%). Those with the least frequent scores in this category were PLA staff (4/44;9%) and NTAs (6%). Typical of those with this long term commitment were this teacher in a reception class,

I became an early childhood educator because I wanted to be a teacher since the age of 4. I was told I was too bossy to do anything else!

Document: 2\_06pb2

This NNEB was also committed to a vocation as much as a job,

I became an early childhood educator because it is what I always wanted to do, so therefore I have achieved an aim in my life

Document: 3\_11, pb11

A Playgroup Leader had a similar sense of a long held goal finally achieved,

I was always fond of children and wanted to work with them when I left school (This was not achieved until later life!) I feel I am now achieving one of my ambitions.

Document: 1\_10, pb10

A Headteacher said,

I have been interested from approximately the age of ten. I worked as an untrained nursery assistant for a year between leaving school at age 17 and entering college at 18 years of

Many of these responses affirm, yet again, the emotional commitment that many early childhood educators feel to their work. It is not too fanciful, in some cases, to describe it as a calling.

An indication of one area from which this deep motivation might originate is apparent in those (27/169, 16%) who described their commitment as evolving out of pleasurable or fulfilling early contacts with children in group situations. This category was particularly strong for NNEBs, of whom nearly one in four (24%, 11/45) referred to previous experiences with groups like the Brownies or Sunday School. It was also stronger for teachers (9/63;14%) and NTAs (3/17;18%) than for PLA staff (4/44; 9%), again underpinning attitudinal differences in staff in the educational sector and the playgroup movement.

Small numbers of other adult workers expressed different reasons for becoming early childhood workers. Briefly, there were those who were interested in children's social development and seeing children mix in groups (9/169, 5%); those who were interested in their own professional development, (6/169, 4%) and those who felt they had a psychological need to be involved with young children (7/169, 4%). the numbers here are too small for valid analysis, but I will close this section with some examples of this later group which make apparent the fact that the need to care is as strong as the need for care in early childhood settings.

I became an early childhood educator because I felt a personal, social need to be around young children after my

own 3 children had started school. the opportunity arose and it fulfilled a life-long ambition to work with children . Due to difficult circumstances at 16 years of age, I did not get the opportunity to take a course at that time relating to childcare.'

PLA Leader, Document: 6-02, pb2

I attended an infertility clinic for six years, but unfortunately we were unable to have children of our own. Therefore I decided that a career change was necessary; I wanted to work with children. This is something I have never regretted, I enjoy my work immensely and being with children has helped me to come to terms with my own problems of infertility.

NNEB, Document: 2\_11,pb 5

I became an early childhood educator because I like young children, their directness and honesty. It is good to be involved right at the very beginning when children are starting school life - one believes one can make a difference. Further I had an unhappy childhood myself, and this despite being bright, caused me considerable learning difficulties, e.g. I didn't read until I was 8. I know how difficult things can be for children.

Early Years Coordinator, Document: 7-08, pb2

#### **6.4.9 The Characteristics of Early Childhood Educators**

In analysing data so far I have been trying to address the research question 5, '*What are the characteristics of those who currently educate young children?*' by looking at the self descriptive answers to key questions in the professional biographies, supplemented by recorded discussions and observations in my log book and the interviews conducted with participants in the settings. I have looked at length and width of experience, qualification, training, deployment, attitudes to gender, attitudes to promotion and management, aspirations, ambition, motivation, commitment, attitudes to working with children and differences between types of role.

The more difficult question to answer is the second part of research question 5; *How do these characteristics affect the teaching and learning process?*

It is difficult because firstly, although early childhood workers share some attributes there is no one defining characteristic which can act as the single variable of effectiveness, and secondly, even if there were, it would be difficult to isolate its impact on teaching and learning process. The national data at present being collated at Worcester as the EEL Project moves into its third phase may, in time, be able to offer some quantitative analysis of this issue. For my purpose in this thesis, however, there is not yet enough evidence to make valid judgments. What I propose, therefore, is to take some of the broader patterns which have emerged and show how these illuminate what has already been discussed. I hope, too, to be able to highlight some of the emerging areas of interest which I can feed back to the larger study as pointers for future development and exploration.

The figures I now intend to use to support my discussion come from data stored on SPSS. The numbers correspond to adults in the same settings as the 169 adults who gave responses to the Professional Biography Questionnaires. It was an agreed condition of their use that individuals could not be identified, so analysis of the cohort cannot go deeper than analysis of the staff at setting level. Nevertheless, useful and valid extrapolations can be made. Given my focus specifically on the adult's Engagement, I will limit my discussion to the relevant data on adults. The number of valid observations of Engagement in these settings is 5487, approximately 40 two minute observations of each of the 169 adults in 70 settings. The observations were mainly carried out by practitioners on themselves but 25% of the cohort were also visited in their setting and

observed by EEL Research team members as I explained in the previous chapter on methodology. Figures for only the four main types of setting in the study are used because the relatively small number of other types of setting makes judgements on these less reliable. The selected four were; playgroups (1635 observations), reception classes (1521 observations), nursery classes (1009 observations) and nursery schools (897 observations).

#### 6.4.10 Ratios

Effectiveness may be influenced by favourable adult to child ratios, so before making comparisons it was necessary to see if these differences could be ascertained. The figures in the four selected main types of setting for the ratio of adults to children are set out in the following table (Figure,33 ).

**Figure 33: Child/Adult Ratios by Type of Setting**

Type & Nos. of Adults/Settings & Observations	Mean	Std Deviation	Maximum	Minimum
Playgroup 44/19 1635	3.96	1.18	4.50	.93
Reception Class 43/19 1521	11.69	6.43	32.00	0.33
Nursery Class 41/19 1009	7.43	2.96	29.00	3.33
Nursery School 29/9 897	9.15	3.63	23.00	0.25

PLA settings in this cohort numbered 44 with a staff of 19 adults. Ratios in this type of setting were the most favourable of the four types of setting and in 1635 recorded observations never exceeded a maximum ratio of one adult to 4.5 children. The 41 adults in 19 reception classes coped with the least favourable ratio (11.69) and the widest range. Adults in reception classes were more likely to be working on their own. Fluctuations in the ratios were usually related to part time support by shared NTAs or NNEBs and, commonly, to occasional voluntary help from parents and others. Reception class children were the least likely to be working in small groups. Staff in Nursery classes enjoyed a slightly better ratio (7.43) than staff in Nursery School (9.15) and whilst both compared favourably with Reception Classes, neither approached the advantages in ratios that the PLA settings enjoyed. Both Nursery schools (23) and classes (29) had relatively high maximum numbers indicating that they too suffer from fluctuations in the numbers of adults present.

#### **7.4.11 General Education Level**

It is also possible that adult effectiveness is related to the general educational level of the adult. The general educational level was a rating adopted to establish the adult's highest level of qualification obtained through either initial training or subsequent in service training. It was possible to identify the observed adults by their general education level as revealed through the completed Professional Biographies. The majority of the adults fell into two broad categories; NVQ Level 3, which included adults with NNEB and PLA Diplomas, and, NVQ Level 5, which generally described those who had a

teaching qualification. Using these two categories to split the recorded observational data stored on SPSS into two roughly balanced groups of valid observations (2319/2253). It was then possible to generate Mean Scores for the three dimensions of Engagement. These findings are set out in Figure 34.

**Figure34: Three Categories of Engagement by General Educational Level**

Nos of Valid Obs.	Sensitivity Mean	Stimulation Mean	Autonomy Mean
NVQ Level 3 2319	4.35	4.13	3.94
NVQ Level 5 2253	<u>4.41</u>	<u>4.24</u>	<u>3.96</u>
Mean difference	= 0.07 (14%)	0.11 (22%)	0.02 (4%)

The pattern revealed, here, indicates that, firstly, both groups seem to be best at sensitive interventions and least good at autonomous interventions. Secondly, the 'NVQ Level 5' group, (graduate level equivalence) appear to be generally more effective in their interventions than the 'NVQ Level 3' group, (NNEB level equivalence) in all dimensions of Engagement. Thirdly, the greatest difference between the two groups lies in their effectiveness in the Stimulation category. A mean difference of 0.11 on a five point scale, represents a substantial difference between 'NVQ Level 5' and 'NVQ Level 3' adults on their Stimulation rating.



These figures also suggest that the quality of the interactive process depends more on the general educative level of the adult and less on the ratio of children to adults. Most of the adults at 'NVQ Level 3' are found within Playgroup settings with very favourable ratios. This advantage does not seem to impact on their relative effectiveness as Engagers. Engagement effectiveness, however, does seem to follow the higher general educational level 'NVQ 5 Level' group whose settings predominantly have the worst ratios of children to adults of all the various types of settings. This would suggest that effectiveness as measured by Engagement is located more in the level of training of the adults and less in the ratio of adults to children. This, clearly, has implications for policy. There is clear evidence that poor ratios are detrimental to quality of experience (McGurk et al. 1995) yet poor training seems more significant.

#### **6.4.12 Self Evaluation as a Means of Professional Development.**

I now want to consider evidence which I hope will illuminate research question

*3, Can early childhood educators self evaluate their educative behaviour? What does the evidence show and how might this evidence be used?*

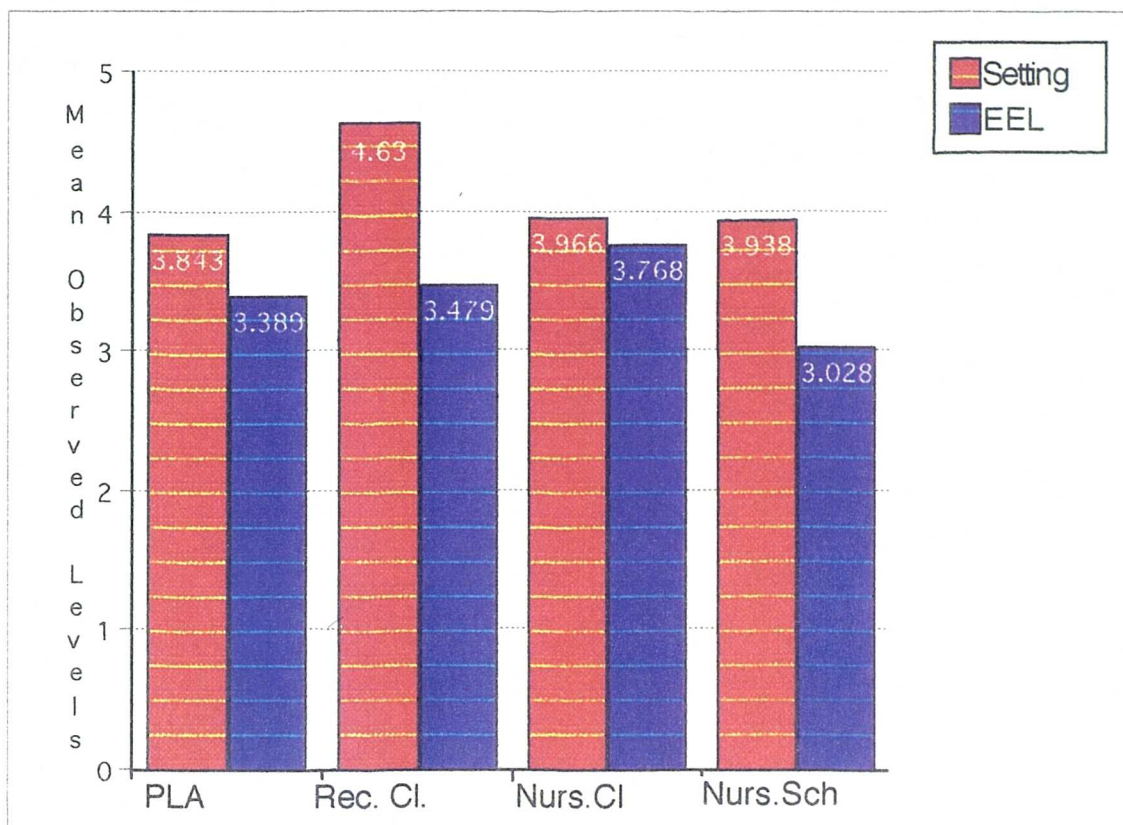
The visits by the EEL Research team to 23 settings, where they made observations of 25% of the sample of the adults, allowed comparisons between their judgments on the Engagement levels in a setting and the judgements of the participant researchers, that is the practitioners themselves, on their colleagues' Engagement levels following the Development Phase of the Evaluation Cycle. These were the settings' second round of observational data

and had taken place no more than 3 weeks before the EEL Team's visits.

The following three graphs (Figure 35, 36 & 37) represent a synthesis of this observational data, looking, in turn, at the comparison of Mean Levels of Sensitivity, Stimulation and Autonomy.

The Adult Engagement Schedule (Figure 13) was used as the instrument to record observations by two groups, which were then collated into Mean Levels for each setting type. The Mean Levels for the EEL Research Team are coloured blue in the graphs, and the setting Mean Level, self evaluations are coloured orange. Only the four main setting types are shown. Other setting types have been discarded as their numbers were not considered sufficient to make valid judgements.

It is important to realise that these setting categories do not reflect precisely differences between adults who are teachers and those who are not. Whilst it is true that all teachers in the study were found in educational settings and that most of those who were unqualified were outside that sector, it must be remembered that, of the 125 adults in Reception, Nursery Classes and Schools, about a half were teachers (63) and about a quarter were NNEBs (45) and 17 were unqualified NTAs. The PLA settings, also, had a quarter of their staff with qualifications at NNEB level, i.e. PLA Diplomas at NVQ level 3. It is simplistic to assume therefore that educational setting staff were all more qualified than PLA staff. What can be said, as we have seen, is that PLA staff, generally, had lower levels of qualification and that educational settings had



**Figure 35: A Comparison of Mean Levels of Observed 'Sensitivity' by Setting Type, Recorded by (a) Setting workers (orange) and (b) EEL Researchers (blue).**

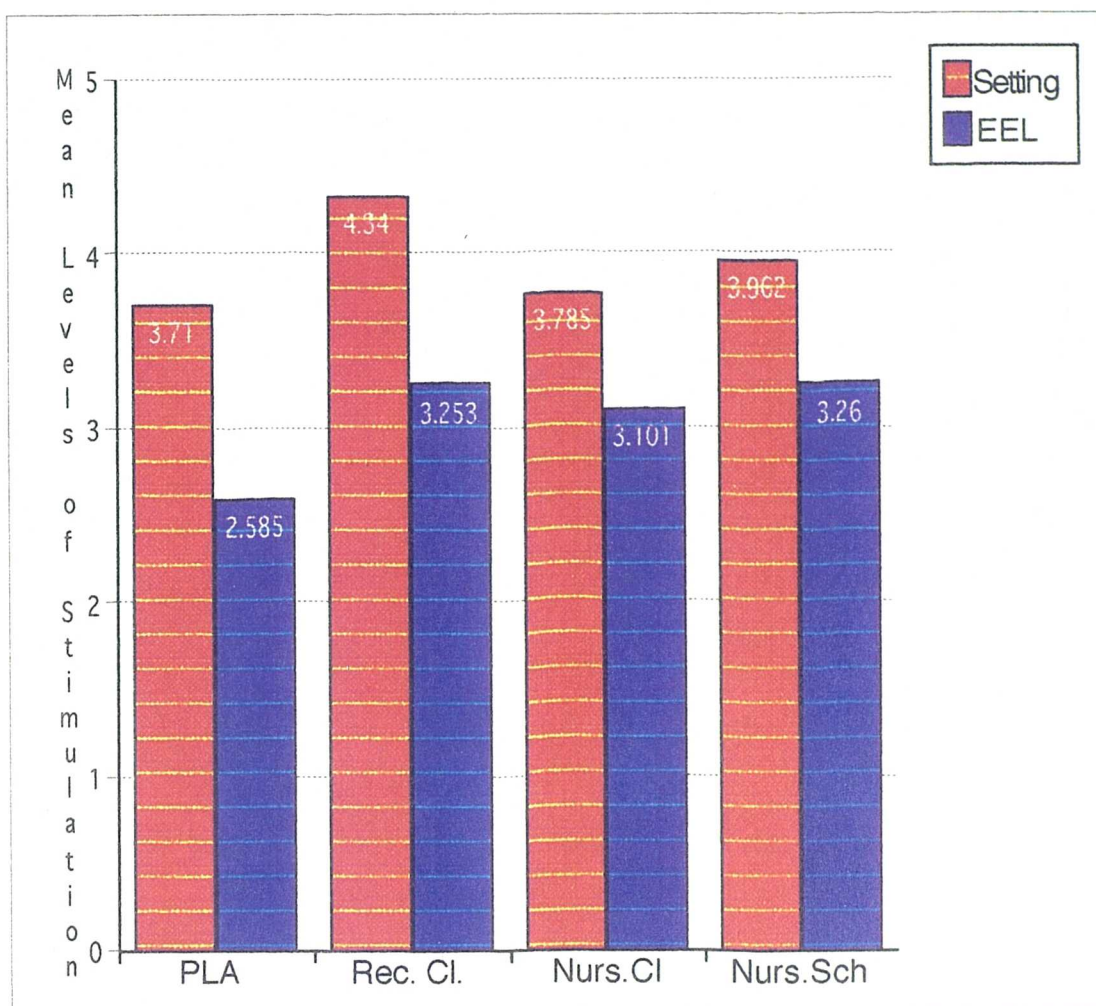
more staff education (at least 50%) who had obtained higher levels of qualification (i.e. NVQ, level 5) than all, bar two, staff in PLA settings.

It is important to establish that the EEL Team observations were spread across the range of settings and were of sufficient quantity. The number of observed recordings of each setting type by each group were as follows:

	PLA	Reception	Nursery Class	Nursery School
Setting workers: Second Round	330	310	240	80
EEL Research Team:	160	258	200	114

The data for the Mean 'Sensitivity' levels reinforces the perception that early childhood workers generally respond to their children with warmth, affection, empathy, respect and encouragement. Laevers (1996) suggests that mean scores over 3.8 represent good practice in individual settings, so these results which are an amalgam of 23 settings suggest that many of these settings are scoring consistently well on Sensitivity. This confirms the data on Engagement we have already considered in relation to general educational levels (see fig. 34) and is further reinforced by the evidence of the practitioners' own attitudes and perception of themselves in the Professional Biography data. Both the setting's second round observations and the monitoring observations of the EEL Research Team indicate that of the three components of Engagement, it is with this element that practitioners, in whatever type of setting, are most competent. Differences occur between types of settings, however.

Figure 35 (on the previous page) shows a comparison of the mean levels of Sensitivity for the round of observations recorded by each group in Playgroups, Reception Classes, Nursery Classes and Nursery Schools. In this study, Nursery Schools, incidentally the setting type where there were least EEL Team observations (80), were recorded by the Team as having the lowest mean score for 'Sensitivity' at 3.028, although they themselves had rated their 'Sensitivity' levels as higher at 3.938. Adults in Reception Classes rated themselves as having the highest mean for 'Sensitivity' but this was not confirmed by the EEL Team who rated them at 3.479. This was less than the EEL mean rating for Nursery Classes who they rated highest of these four types of setting at 3.768. Nursery Classes were also the most accurate at rating their own mean 'Sensitivity' (3.966) when comparing it to the EEL mean rating for

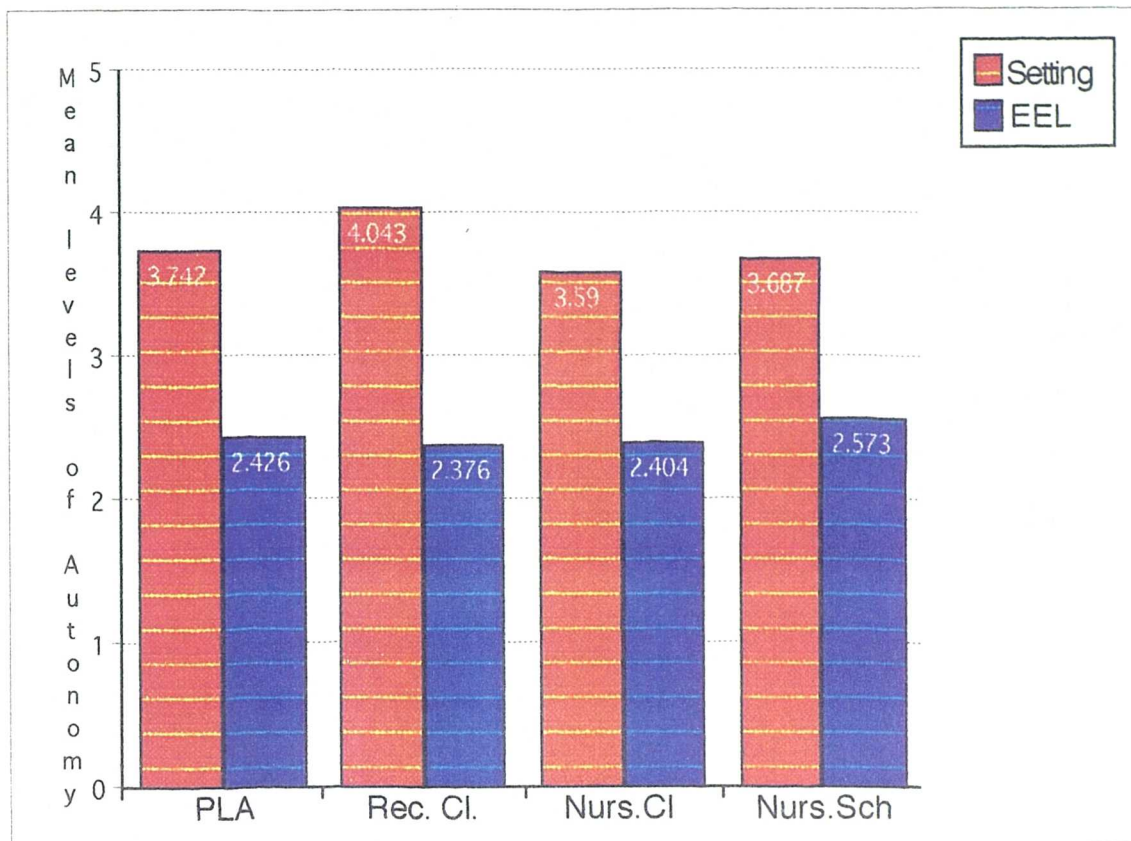


**Figure 36: A Comparison of Mean Levels of Observed 'Stimulation' by Setting Type, Recorded by (a) Setting workers (orange) and (b) EEL Researchers (blue).**

their type of setting. We shall look at these differences between the recorded means of the two groups of observers more closely, later (see Fig. 38), to see if there is any evidence to support the view that self evaluation is less accurate than observation by external moderators, and, if so, to what extent.

Figure 36 (above) looks at the mean Levels of the two categories of observer for 'Stimulation' across the four setting types. Nursery Schools were rated most highly by the EEL Team at a mean of 3.26 closely followed by Reception Classes which the Team rated as having a mean of 3.253. Nursery Schools were the only setting type to score higher on this aspect



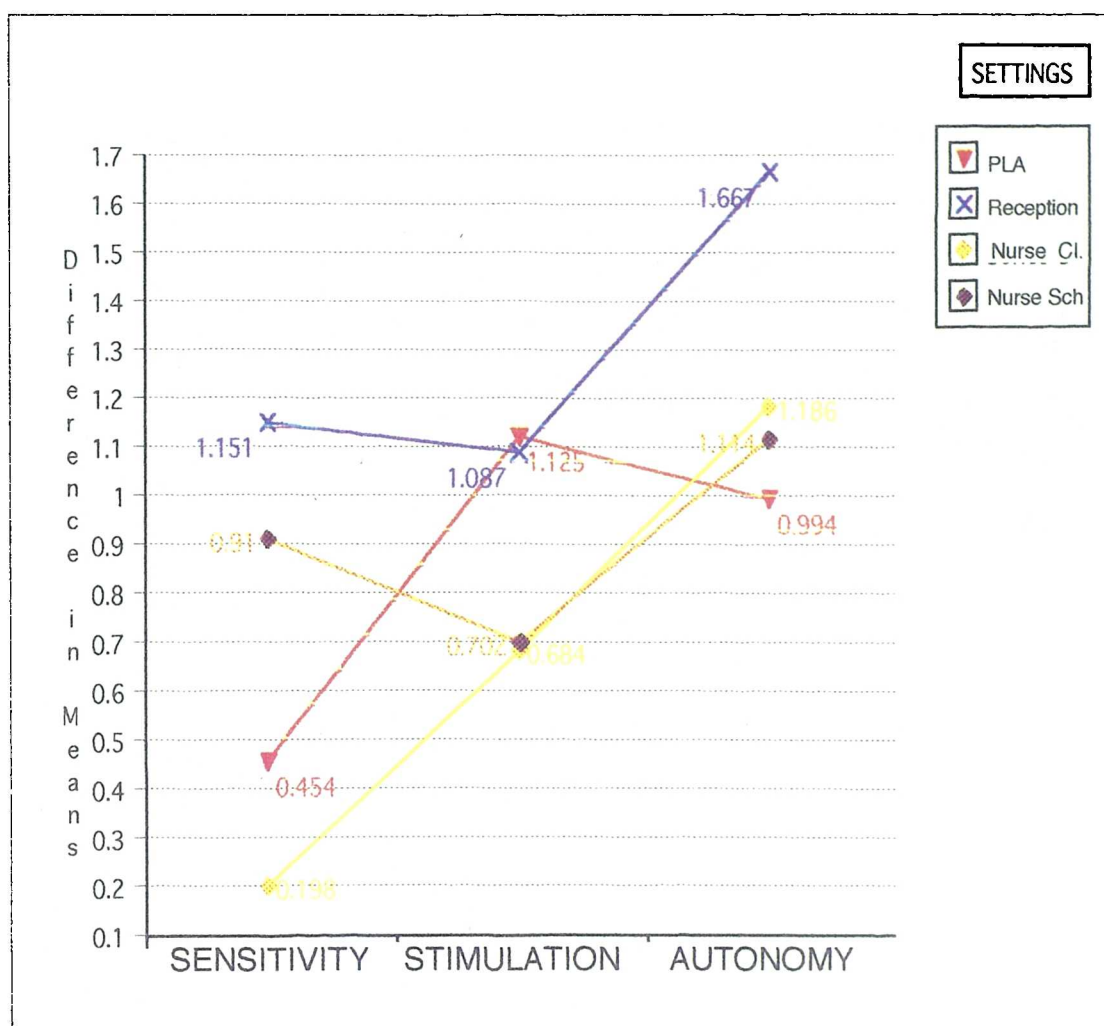


**Figure 37: A Comparison of Mean Levels of Observed 'Autonomy' by Setting, Recorded by (1) Setting workers (orange) and (2) EEL Researchers (blue).**

of Engagement than any other. All other types of setting were recorded, both by themselves and by the EEL Team, as having lower mean Stimulation scores of Engagement than any other. All other types of setting were recorded, both by themselves and by the EEL Team, as having lower mean Stimulation scores than their mean Sensitivity scores. This would seem to affirm that there is a hierarchical character to the three elements of Engagement as I hypothesised in chapter 7. The educational settings, generally, had higher mean levels for Stimulation and the difference between their scores, as a group, and the PLA settings were greatest for this category of Engagement. The PLA mean score was self rated at 3.710 and rated by the EEL Team at 2.585, and the anomaly between these two ratings was larger than for any type of setting in this category of Stimulation.

Again Nursery Classes and, to a lesser extent, Nursery Schools were better at evaluating their performance if we accept the mean observations of the EEL Team as a control.

The graph in Figure 37 (previous page) focuses on the third element of Engagement, Autonomy. Again, the mean levels of the recorded decisions of the two observing groups, the setting self evaluators and the EEL monitoring Team, are set out across the four main setting types. Autonomy is rated in all types of setting by both groups of recorders as having the lowest scores. This suggests that practitioners are aware that they are not scoring highly in this area because they are capable of observing and recording it themselves. Indeed, in the Action Plans they drew up at the end of the Evaluation Phase, many of the settings acknowledged the need to address this aspect of their practice. It is this element of Engagement - allowing for choice, encouraging negotiation and mutual respect, giving responsibility, that all practitioners agree, and had confirmed by the EEL Team, is problematic. It appears less often in interactions in their setting than either Sensitivity or Stimulation. Yet they all agree that it is important. My research log (several entries, September 1994 - April 1995) records that during each preliminary session I asked those who I was training if they agreed that it is an important element in development. Although there was debate around the issue, there was never disagreement about its centrality. Indeed, there is confirmation of this in the data itself. The figures recorded by the practitioners indicate that when compared to the EEL Team control, they are all more generous in their observations of themselves in this category than any of the other categories in which they observe themselves. They may not actually achieve high levels of Autonomy but they certainly aspire to do so and



**Figure 38: Differences between Setting Workers and EEL Researchers in Mean Levels of Observed Categories of 'Engagement' by Setting Type.**

rate themselves generously. The one exception are the PLA settings who, whilst being generous to themselves in terms of their Autonomy scores, are even more generous in terms of their Stimulation ratings. Perhaps this is aspirational, too. The staff who rate themselves most highly (4.043) on Autonomy scores are those in Reception Classes, who, in fact, had the lowest mean score on the EEL Team rating (2.376). The second lowest EEL mean score was in Nursery Classes (2.404). Thus, the two settings that are found in Primary schools had the two lowest mean Autonomy scores. Perhaps this indicates some imbalance between the aspirations of staff in



those settings to let children make choices, and the practical realities of 'formal schooling' which increasingly restricts their ability to do so. The two types of setting most outside the accountable school system, PLA (EEL rating, 2.426) and Nursery Schools (2.573), gave their children more opportunities, in their interactions, for Autonomy.

At this point, it may be useful to examine more closely the mean differences to see if these reveal any information about the validity of self evaluation. Figure 38, above, sets out the degree of agreement between the mean level, self-evaluation, rating given by practitioners to their settings and mean level given by the EEL monitoring Team for each of the three categories of Engagement.

The general pattern is for settings to get progressively less accurate at scoring their observations as they rate: Sensitivity → Stimulation → Autonomy. That is to say they are best at rating themselves on Sensitivity and least good at rating their Autonomy levels. Nursery classes are most accurate at making self evaluation (as measured by the EEL control) and their rating means are very followed very closely by the Nursery Schools, who apart from the outlier on Sensitivity, are almost identical in their accuracy. Playgroups, too, follow the same pattern except for their outlier based on Stimulation. The type who are consistently over stating reality, if that is what the EEL Team control represent, are the staff of Reception Classes.

This clearly shows that staff in reception classes, though scoring relatively well across all the categories, even in the control assessments, consistently exaggerate their effectiveness. For both Sensitivity (mean difference 1.151) and

for Autonomy (mean difference 1.667) the difference between their rated scores and those of the EEL Team are greater than for any other type. For Stimulation, in which they rated best of all the types by the control group, they also exaggerate their settings' scores, but marginally less so than the PLA settings.

The EEL research process was designed to take the form of an action research in which the practitioners in their settings would not only take part in rigorous, systematic evaluatory research but would also, through that process, be able to develop professionally. These two elements are the underpinning of rationale of this section. Clearly, the general patterns of observations in the three elements of engagement are similar for both research group and the practitioner group. The maximum/ minimum range for each category of Engagement, where EEL is assumed as the base at zero, is 0.198 to 1.151 for Sensitivity, 0.702 to 1.125 for Stimulation and 0.994 to 1.667 for Autonomy. It may be possible, when the mass of data of the main EEL Project is available, to construct a mathematical model which would take account for the bias inevitably built into judgements made by practitioners in their own settings. For example, as illustration, on these figures with this relatively small sample, judgements about Sensitivity and Stimulation could be lowered by an amount between 0.5 and 1, and judgements on Autonomy could be lowered by an amount between 1.0 and 1.5.

It is my belief that early childhood educators are well able to make judgments about the quality of their educational interactions. Indeed, Handy (1992) would argue that any operative unable to make reflective judgements about their activities cannot be effective. The research tools of the Project and especially the Engagement Scale have given practitioners the means to judge themselves

and their colleagues. Perhaps they do not do this as accurately as trained researchers, and we could speculate on the reasons for this. I certainly believe it is necessary to have some form of external validation of their judgements. Perhaps, too, bias can be mathematically accounted for in any analysis. But the central point is that putting these research tools in the hands of practitioners empowers them to take charge of their own development and gives them different ways of looking at and assessing their competence. The loss of some accuracy seems a relatively small price to pay for such an important gain.

### **6.5 The Effects of 'Professional Self Image'**

*Research Question 4. How far does a 'Professional Self Image' affect an early childhood educator's ability to be an 'Engager'.*

To answer this final research question I want to focus now on the Adult Engagement qualities which seem to be linked to, and based on, what I call the Adult's 'Professional Self Image and Well Being'. I am thinking here of the social psychology of practitioners, their view of themselves and others, how they feel others view them and so forth. I see this not simply in terms of their private, individual persona but also in terms of their role as an effective early childhood educator. What is their professional self image and professional emotional well being? How do they feel about themselves in this professional role and how do they feel others perceive them? Do 'engaging adults' reveal characteristics and patterns of behaviour which underpin their ability to be effective early childhood educators and can this be related to their perception of their role? I believe that the evidence I have already reviewed shows a difference between certain kinds of practitioners and that these differences are based, to some extent, on

the strength of their individual Professional Well Being and Professional Self Image. The data revealed that some adults feel stronger and more positive about their role than others.

High levels of Sensitivity, as described in the Adult Engagement Schedule (see Figure 13), are achieved by those who enjoy young children and their families. These educators are open, well balanced and celebrate difference. They are responsive to the needs of children and value their parents and other carers. The evidence set out in Figure 27 (Text Search for 'Attitude' words), and in response to the Professional Biography questions on commitment (Figure 32) suggest that most early childhood workers have a well developed sensitivity to their children and an enjoyment of their work which borders on dedication. Evidence on openness is less obvious, and one major doubt in this area concerns gender and the lack of acknowledgement or encouragement for men as participators and role models (see Figure 26). Given that we have evidence that attitudes are set in these crucial early years (Lazar and Darlington, 1982) this may offer an explanation of the continuing academic underachievement of men. Nevertheless, the numerical evidence based on mean observation scores set out in Figure 35 indicates that Sensitivity is a relatively high scoring feature of nearly all adults in early childhood settings as observed by the EEL control team, regardless of role type or the setting type in which they work.

Furthermore, evidence from the Participant Interviews with parents, practitioners and managers suggests that all the participants are keen to stress the importance of the affective domain in early childhood education. Over two thirds of the respondents emphasised the need for children to be given 'love'

and 'care'. Interestingly, practitioners in school settings were slightly more likely to say this than other educators. Some illustrative examples give evidence of this emphasis on the affective domain in the culture of the settings.

The children need a loving relationship and to be taught by someone who cares.

Practitioner in a Nursery School, Document: 3-04. Int. 55

The children need company, friendship and love.

Parent in a Reception Class, Document: 4.11. Int. P.5

The children need to be respected and given hugs, cuddles and kisses.

Parent in PLA Setting, Document: 2\_ 13. Int.53

Parents and other participants, clearly want educators who have the attributes of Sensitivity.

Stimulation requires a different set of characteristics. The adult who is good at Stimulation has been appropriately trained, values continuing professional development, has pedagogical skills enhanced by experience, awareness and knowledge, and is reflective and analytical about practice. Evidence for this comes from the mean observation scores for Stimulation in educational settings (Figure 36) which were higher than those for settings with relatively less well trained staff. Reception classes were scored by the EEL Team at a mean level of 3.253 compared to PLA settings which had a mean level of 2.585. Evidence that educational settings have more experienced staff (Figure 29) supports the claim that experienced staff may also be better Stimulators. Educational settings which have higher mean levels of Stimulation have also higher

numbers of staff with longer experience. PLA settings with generally lower mean level of Stimulation have also fewer staff with length of experience.

	After 10 years	After 15 years	Mean Stimulation Observed by EEL Control
Staff of Educational settings:	26%	18%	3.253
Staff of PLA Settings:	18%	2%	2.585

Experience in itself is not a guarantee of development. What is also required, of course, is that this longer pattern of employment is accompanied by reflection on, and analysis of, the experience. Training and education level would seem to make that more likely. Patterns of qualification (Figure 31) and the recorded observations set out in Figure 34, in which mean levels of the three categories of Engagement were set against general educational level also confirm that education of the adult is a crucial factor in acquiring high Stimulation scores. Finally, the central importance of appropriate and continuing training is acknowledged by the practitioners themselves ranking it the most frequent response to the Professional Biography question, 'What would help you?'. Adult 'Engagers' who have high Stimulation scores are likely, then, to have the characteristics of Professional Well Being and Self Image described in Figure 39 (above).

The Participant Interviews also reveal the significance of Stimulation attributes for the practitioners. Across all sectors there was more emphasis in responses

on the educative role than on the caring one, but the school (76% of their responses) and the private (89%) sectors put nearly twice as much emphasis on education than the voluntary (27%) and social services (38%) sectors. Some illustrative comments give the flavour of this,

We are involved in planning and implementing the curriculum.

Practitioner, Nursery School, Document: 5\_13, Int. 53

We observe the children and record their progress in order to help them develop socially, intellectually, emotionally and physically.

Practitioner, Reception Class, Document: 6\_08, Int. 52

We work as a team to facilitate the children's learning.

Practitioner, Private Nursery, Document: 1\_05, Int. 52

The staff encourage and educate the children - in the beginning we were looked upon as babysitters but this has now changed.

Practitioner, PLA, Document: 5-13, Int. 54

The role of the staff is not to be a teacher. We are there for guidance, to be an extended family.

Practitioner, Playgroup, Document: 6\_01, Int.51

We are a friend - a mother figure

Practitioner, Social Services' Family Centre, Document: 3\_02, Int. 51

Children, too, in all kinds of settings and sectors affirmed the emphasis on the educative process as a central element in their setting. When asked 'what do you do?', the majority of children across sectors (approximately 66%) responded by describing aspects of the curriculum,

We sing Annie Apple and do writing.

Child in a Nursery Class, Document: 6\_03, Int.C5

We do alphabet and counting.

Child in Private Nursery, Document: 1\_04, Int. C3

We do worksheets.

Child in Reception Class, Document: 3\_11, Int. C3

I have homework in a big book.

Child in Nursery School, Document: 4\_07, Int. C2

The third category of the Engagement, Autonomy, measures the degree to which the practitioner feels able to give negotiated choice and control to the child. Evidence from the Participant Interviews followed a consistent pattern across sectors: approximately 25% of all practitioners emphasised that their relationships with children were based on discipline. Learning the adults' behavioural expectations was a key element in this. Just as there was little difference between types of settings on this issue, so was there little difference by role type of adult; parents, managers and practitioners; all had similar views on discipline.

The children need discipline, learning and loving.

Nursery School Parent, Document: 3\_06, Int. P5

Relationships need to be loving. They often come for cuddles, but you need to be firm and make sure they learn what is right and wrong.

PLA Assistant, Document: 4\_13, Int. S3

The children need to be organised and disciplined.

Parent in a Nursery Class, Document: 5\_06, Int. P2

The children call us teachers but we have to be judge and jury on their behaviour.

PLA Supervisor, Document: 6\_02, Int. S1

The children, too, in all kinds of settings and across sectors, knew that discipline and behaviour were important. In answer to the question 'what do you do?'



nearly 24% spoke of behavioural issues.

I learn to be good, very, very good

Child in a Reception Class, Document: 4\_11, Int.C6

I learn to behave

Child in Private Day Nursery, Document: 3\_05, Int.C4

In all these Participant Interviews with parents, practitioners, managers and children very few (less than 1%) mentioned individual self expression, independence, choice or agreed, negotiated understanding of rules. Autonomy in this sense was hardly considered. Why is this? Perhaps, we need to look for an explanation in our society's view of children. Stevenson et al. (1993) undertook a comparative observational study, for example, which indicated that surprisingly, given media stereotypes, young children (aged 3-6 in Kindergardens) in Japanese settings were much less consistently controlled or disciplined than those in Minneapolis (USA) settings. The Japanese did not repeatedly insist on children conforming because they thought children of this age could not accept, developmentally, that sort of continual stricture. Young children in Japanese and Chinese settings were much less likely to be asked to conform in settings than American children. If they were asked to conform and chose not to they were less likely to be admonished again and their behaviour was tolerated. This was an American study, but it seems likely, from the attitudes expressed in the data, that UK settings may well be less tolerant of 'deviency' than American, Chinese or Japanese settings. Despite our view of the importance of the individual, our society does not seem to think of children in this way or encourage autonomy in children.

We need to look too, at the ability of the adult educator to give Autonomy. The

adage that 'only the empowered can be empowering' is applicable here. Perhaps there are more subtle elements operating in this category of Engagement than in the others. Where adults in settings feel acknowledged and valued, they in turn are more likely to acknowledge and value their children and their families and carers. It might be supposed that Autonomy could be enhanced with training but the evidence does not support this. Figure 37 indicates that all types of setting perform less well than they do in other categories of Engagement (Figure 36 for Sensitivity, Figure 35 for Stimulation). Their reluctance to do so may rest more in the affective domain than in training or experience. Giving Autonomy is about giving more control to children for their own learning. In themselves, Sensitivity and Stimulation are necessary but not sufficient conditions for Autonomy, so those that score highly on the former do not necessarily score more highly on this category. Sensitivity and Stimulation are not predictors for Autonomy (c.f. Figs. 37,36,35). Adults who score highly in this category must have a sense of their own value and worth, to have power, as it were, to give away. They must be strong, informed and articulate and able to reach out of their own milieu. But early childhood educators in school settings seem more likely to voice concerns about the threat of new limitations from external pressures.

I enjoy my work and would not like to see the situation deteriorate.

NNEB in Nursery School, Document: 2\_11PB2

Early years teaching is enjoyable because it is not bound religiously to the National Curriculum.

Teacher in Nursery School, Document: 2\_18 PB1

It would help to have more Government support and understanding of the Under Fives. Sometimes I just wish they'd

leave us alone to get on with it. I hope they don't spoil it.

Teacher in Nursery Schol, Document: 8\_06 PB2

A recognised career structure should help empowerment because it gives public acknowledgement of success. Yet the better qualified workers in early childhood, who usually have a career ladder, do not appear to perform significantly better than others in Mean Autonomy levels, as Figure 34 suggests (NVQ Level 3: 3.94; NVQ Level 5: 3.96). Mean Autonomy Levels set against setting type (Figure 37) confirm the generally poor ratings. Confidence in others' regard, and confidence that the importance of their work is recognised, are key elements of the personal characteristics which support those who give Autonomy. Sadly, the lack of any evidence of this, and some evidence to the contrary in Professional Biographies and the Participant Interviews, suggests that few early childhood educators have a positive view of how their work and their role is viewed by others. It is understandable in a society which undervalues women and sees the care and education of young children as 'women's work'.

The evidence would seem to indicate, therefore, that the personal and professional self image and well being of early childhood educators influences their ability to be effective 'engagers'. In particular, it would seem that the social construct of childhood in the UK makes autonomy giving difficult. Early childhood educators wishing to assert their professional beliefs about autonomy need to be articulate, knowledgeable and strong. Their status and recognition and feelings of professional self worth, however, leaves them 'domesticated' (Freire, 1995) and disempowered, eroding their ability to give 'Autonomy' to their children. Moser (1996) speaking of teachers, although it might equally

apply to other early childhood educators, suggests a 'cost free proposal' to improve their performance,

'No profession can expect to attain or retain high motivation, let alone attract good recruits, if it is constantly run down in public... I wish to see a total change in public attitude, led by the way politicians, especially Government and responsible officials talk about teachers'.

Moser (1996), p.68

More than any other sector, this is what is needed for all workers in early childhood education.

## **Chapter 7: Discussion and Recommendations**

In this final chapter, I want to discuss some of the substantive issues which, I feel, have emerged from this study and to make some recommendations about what should be addressed at practice, policy and research level. I also want to postulate a theory of 'adult educative dispositions', a concept which has been generated by the study, as a means of understanding what makes effective early childhood educators.

### **7.1 Substantive Issues**

For reasons of clarity I have attempted here to delineate discreet elements arising from the study. In reality many of these interact and interrelate.

#### **7.1.1 Definitions**

There is a need for an exploration of shared meanings. We need to create forums in which the terminology we use to describe our work achieves some element of universally accepted understanding amongst all the stakeholders in early childhood education. The agreement needs to be cross sector and across disciplines, to be accessible to parents and carers and to be acknowledged by policy makers at local and national level. The process of this debate would, in itself, provide an excellent opportunity to share knowledge and increase collaboration between colleagues in different sectors. Put simply, what I am saying is that we all need to know, literally, what it is that we are talking about and to do that we need to meet and listen and talk to others.

### **7.1.2 A Unified Policy**

Early childhood does not exist as an island. Concern for provision for young children should be set into wider social issues such as, the length of paid maternity and paternity leave, out of school and extended day provision. The notion that this is an issue only for individuals and families needs challenging. As does the notion that this is merely a women's issue. The education, care and upbringing of our children is a societal matter and concerns all people not just those involved more immediately. A Ministry of Children with power to influence other Ministries' decisions, where these might affect children, might help raise the profile of these issues. Such a model operates very successfully in Denmark.

There is considerable current debate in the UK Health Service about the limitations of a market economy in achieving effectiveness in public service organisations. The attempt to follow a similar principle in early childhood educational provision is likely to lead to similar dissatisfactions. The introduction of a system of vouchers, ostensibly to improve variety and choice, offers no guarantee of quality. Further, it is aimed to encourage competition between services which may drive out the semi-voluntary sector and stifle creative partnerships. What is needed is recognition that all sectors have an interrelated but different role to play in providing for young children. They should be proactive in seeking collaboration to ensure quality provision is evident in all settings regardless of their type. The data presented in this thesis shows that many practitioners, particularly those in state education settings, had experience in other sectors. In the majority of school settings there was at least one teacher who had worked in, and had an understanding of, another sector. Because of this, and also because schools are more uniformly, geographically spread, have more qualified and

experienced staff and have greater resources, I would locate the initiative for more collaboration with them. Ideally, I would like schools to reach out into their communities to respond to their needs, to give advice to parents on child rearing, to support child minders, playgroups and other providers, to create forums for discussion and even to share some of their resources. This will need additional funding, more training, better ratios and more non-contact time for early years staff. I would like to see posts of responsibility given for school staff who undertake this work of coordinating community provision. This, in itself, might enhance the standing of early years' practitioners, particularly in larger primary schools and in the wider community. It will bring schools closer to those they serve and, most importantly, ensure a greater degree of continuity of experience for the child.

### **7.1.3 A Model of Effectiveness in Early Childhood Settings**

The innovative 'Model of Effectiveness in Early Childhood Settings' I have described in Chapter 2 will, I hope, contribute to the debate in this field. It provides for the first time a comprehensive view of an evaluative cycle which incorporates, within one framework, criteria for making judgments about the context, the process and the outcomes. Models of effectiveness in early childhood have, perhaps, tended to focus either on 'context' variables or on 'outcome' variables, or some combination of both. These are important criteria, of course, but they are not the sole ones, for assessing quality. Furthermore, the level of debate about even this limited range assessment procedures has been inadequate. Discussion on context often degenerates into unhelpful, positional conflicts about resourcing and staffing issues. The outcome criteria, too, have been reduced to minimalist criteria about academic achievement. The outcome measures, I would suggest need to be far more challenging than this. We need, for example, to find ways of

measuring and assessing children's 'dispositions to learn', to think about a more proactive stance on pro social education and to recognise that intelligence has a variety of expressions (Davis & Gardner, 1995) and needs a corresponding variety of medium for its expression.

We should be bolder about asserting the importance of the affective domain for both children and staff and get better at showing that this is not sentimentality or 'niceness' but based on psychological and biological research which show it is central to how thinking and effective growth develop (Goleman, 1996). Psychology and education should be more closely linked and given greater credence, especially by policy makers.

What I hope I have brought to the fore is the importance of assessing the 'process' variables in evaluation, which for too long have remained in the 'black box' of educational research. The research tools and methodology for this process have been developed over a number of years and have been shaped by, and made accessible and relevant to, an ever increasing number of practitioners from a wide range of backgrounds. Future developments will include adapting the assessment process to use with the parents of home based children with special needs in a Home Counties' LEA, adopting the materials for use with the 0-5 year olds and with later years children in a Welsh LEA and using the evaluative model in social services in the Netherlands. Longitudinal studies in two urban LEAs will give credibility to claims that process affects outcomes. All this, and the on going EEL Project now involving nearly 60 LEAs in the UK, should make the evaluative process stronger and provide an increasingly stronger bank of research data. Later, on the basis of these data, it will be possible to look at ways of standardising the two key observational tools, Child Involvement and Adult Engagement.



This will increase the credibility and recognition of the instruments, and also increase their utility, in that they will be able to be used in more ways, diagnostically and developmentally.

#### **7.1.4 The Concept of 'Engagement'**

The concept and use of the term 'engagement' is innovative. It builds on the work of Rogers, Vygotsky and Laevers but I hope it carries the debate forward by extending their ideas with an original and useful perspective for both research and practice. Clearly, we have to get better at marrying psychological and educational perspectives, and at attempting a more scientific delineation and analysis of what characteristics make an effective early childhood educator. Much of the current debate at policy level seems simplistic and perhaps Alexander (1992) is right to claim that notions of 'good practice' are badly conceptualised. The notion of 'engagement' is a serious attempt to address these weakness.

#### **7.1.5 The Engagement Scale**

The Scale, though derived from Laevers, is a unique formulation for observing and quantifying the quality of educative interactions. It is much closer to practitioners view of their work in seeking to assess what they feel are the important elements than many of the tools which are currently available to judge their settings (Harms and Clifford, 1995 ; PLA Accreditation 1993; DES, 1996). They know that they are being assessed on the things they agree are important and know that the process of the assessment has some scientific and objective basis. It is accessible to all workers and is capable of being used, with appropriate training, by practitioners across differing contexts. I do not believe this kind of assessment has been implemented before.

### **7.1.6 Innovative methodology**

I hope that the methodology was innovative in a number of ways. Its 'interpretive' perspective offered an amalgam of paradigms, both quantitative and qualitative. It involved practitioner researchers in large numbers developing Aspy's model (1977) by giving the tools directly into the hands of the educators. It was a democratic, 'inclusionary' (Moss,1994) and empowering process. It focused on the 'black box' process dimension (McNamara,1980) when there seems a lack of other models to incorporate this. It was 'real world' (Robson, 1993) and gave relevance and insights for practice (Hargreaves, 1996). The use of computer analytical techniques (Richards, 1995) has enabled large numbers of cases to be processed, coded and analysed deductively. Qualitative data can be presented in quantitative ways. I think the most important contribution, however, is that the methodology offers a more rigorous and systematic means by which educators can be evaluated, assessed and compared by themselves and/or by others.

### **7.1.7 Linking Research and Practice**

Practitioners need collaborative contact with researchers and others from Higher Education. They need accessible methodologies, instruments and frameworks, and encouragement to contextualise them to their settings, that is, to make them their own. The research methodology we have developed has not only allowed practitioners to make flexible but systematic and rigorous judgments about their own practice, but has contributed to the development of a common and shared vocabulary with other colleagues across sectors. The process of training and dissemination described earlier in Chapter 5, has shown, also, that it is possible to adopt and extend the model of Aspy and Roebuck (1977) and successfully allow large numbers of

practitioners to be effective action researchers in their settings. This closeness of research to practice, each informing and developing the other, is another deliberately designed characteristic of my work, and I agree with much of Hargreaves' criticism (1996) about the need for relevance in educational theory and Robson's (1993) ideas of 'real world' research.

#### **7.1.8 Externally Validated Self Evaluation**

What is needed at this time is collaboration and agreed systems of quality control, that go beyond a 'light touch' inspection based on minimal criteria. Ideally, these systems should be affordable, rigorous, self evaluatory procedures, that can be externally validated and verified by existing bodies at little extra cost. I would hope that the EEL Project goes some way to offering such a process, and that this study has shown what a crucial role educators must play in evaluating themselves. There is clearly a need for evaluation and development strategies to be reassessed.

Practitioners cannot work alone in assessing their settings, however. There needs to be some minimal support and moderation by external validators and, we have found, networks of peer support have also proved beneficial. The degree of validity and reliability of the observational data, especially when practitioners are being asked to assess colleagues, is directly related to the amount of external moderation of the process by competent others, the 'outsider' perspective. The amount of validation necessary is also related to the reflective maturity of the setting. Settings with innovative climates, with a strong communal feeling of self worth, commitment and openness to critique are more effective self evaluators. They are more able to advance with minimal support. Validity, however, is usually of greater concern to researchers than to practitioners, and at the level of professional

development, the process of evaluatory research can be of benefit without the formal requirements of validity being necessary.

#### **7.1.9 Action Plans**

Settings developed through the process of evaluation and their use of research methods to see themselves in new and different ways. Settings were also more directly developed by the implementation of their Action Plans, which were designed to flow from the evaluative process. Incremental improvement was driven forward by the Action Plan the staff themselves made following their written evaluation of their setting. This detailed the specific action, the timetable, the resource implications, the responsibilities and the 'impact measures'. The impact measures were decided by the staff themselves as evidence of when the action had been achieved. This formalised process, whilst leaving supported decisions about what to target in the hands of the practitioners, gave rigour to development and allowed achievement to be demonstrated. The second round of observations, in the post - Action Plan implementation period also looked for scientific and measurable ways of making judgments on effectiveness. I believe judgments about settings need to be placed in the hands of those who are to implement changes but the function of research and of external support advisers and inspectors is to provide them with the tools to do so scientifically and systematically, and to support them in this process. In this way growth, reflectiveness and empowerment are all enhanced.

#### **7.1.10 Parental Partnership**

The Participant Interviews revealed and confirmed for many settings the importance of parental partnership. If knowledge is to be embedded then it must be located in a child's previous experiences. With very young children

the person who has the greatest knowledge of their previous experiences is their parent or carer. Parental involvement is necessary. Too many parents suggest that they are often made to feel welcome but rarely made to feel necessary. This was an important discovery for many settings and the development of parental partnership strategies accounted for a significant number of the Action Plan foci within the study settings. Data from the United States confirms that successful programmes, including High Scope incidentally, were characterised by high parental involvement. If we are seeking to change attitudes to learning, we must involve parents closely, openly and unpatronisingly, in what we are seeking to do. Margaret McMillan knew this, though perhaps the rigid class distinctions of her time lead her to adopt a too magisterial tone. Relating to, and working with, parents is an important part of the early childhood practitioners role, yet it is missing from many initial courses, particularly teacher education courses. This needs to be addressed.

It may be that the pattern of categories of Engagement I have described can be applied to the development of relationships between parent and educator. I am advocating, sensitivity, genuineness, congruence and empathy to parents, stimulation of parents and sharing of professional knowledge, but I am also suggesting we should be empowering them by allowing them to feel autonomous about their decisions for raising their children. I do not believe that we should, or could, make parents feel deskilled, inadequate or guilty by professionalising child rearing. But I am saying that collaboration and sharing will make all participants stronger and better informed about each other. This can only be of greater benefit to the children and the continuity of their experience. Practitioners need to improve their skills in dealing with parents in this way.

One of the concurrent projects based in the Centre for Research in Early Childhood at Worcester is an initiative by an LEA in the south east of England to train parents of children with special needs and their child's teachers, together in the observational schedule of the Adult Engagement Style. This, it is hoped, will provide evidence to adapt the Observation Scale for use by parents, thus allowing them to participate on a more equal footing with the practitioners. At the same time, the Scale is being used to appraise the teachers' interactions with the parents to allow the practitioners to assess the degree of sensitivity, stimulation and empowerment (autonomy) they appear to be giving to the parents. I believe that the ability to relate to and work closely with parents in an educative partnership is a critically important part of an effective early childhood educator's role.

#### **7.1.11 The Characteristics of Early Childhood Educators**

There has been little investigation into what kinds of adults are working with young children; what their experiences are and the differences between them in their different settings. This study attempted to identify some of these issues. The data analysis indicated certain key characteristics of Early Childhood Educators. These might be grouped under three broad themes:

##### **1. Deep commitment**

- they often have a deep emotional and vocational commitment to children
- they express satisfaction and joy in their work
- they emphasise the importance of relationships in their work
- they stress the affective domain and the importance of the child's well being

##### **2. General educational level**

- the quality of the educational level of early years' workers can be poor,

- there is a lack of training opportunities yet a strong universal desire for it,
- training and length of service seem linked to the educational development of children

### 3. Status and career

- many lack the desire to become managers
- few have managerial status
- they tend to be 'hermetic' but some teachers and many educational setting managers have crossed sectors or age range
- many, especially NNEBs, lack career opportunities or incentive rewards
- women overwhelmingly predominate and most settings are all female staff
- most are dissatisfied with their perception of how 'outsiders' view them and their work.

Until we know more about these practitioners we are not going to be able to address their developmental needs.

#### **7.1.12 Training and Accreditation**

Practitioners need access to appropriate training. This training should be open to all according to their current level of attainment and it should carry nationally recognised accreditation. Many early childhood educators are often beginning, or returning to, paid work and are in need of a ladder of opportunity and qualifications which give them increasing status, recognition and self esteem. Others, especially NNEBs and NTAs, as the data indicated, need to have access to training, both jointly and separately from differently qualified colleagues, and to have a structured career. Accreditation should be established for courses and accumulation of credits should be linked to rewards for the individual such as incremental points on a salary structure.

Appraisal, too, could be linked to some more scientific assessment of the practitioner. As well as a monitoring tool, it should allow practitioners to recognise their strengths and weaknesses and be linked to a personal development plan that empowers and enhances. There is, of course, a personal incentive on behalf of most practitioners to seek professional development opportunities. We need to look at the barriers which stop them achieving their goal, at the quality and relevance of courses and at empowerment, professional growth, self esteem, acknowledgement and status which comes with quality training.

In UK state school settings, the Ofsted inspection process is now to rate teachers on a grading of 1-7 and report to the governors and Headteacher those who are found to be at levels 1,2, 6 and 7 (OFSTED, 1995). The methodology of their data collection and scoring has not been subjected to rigorous scientific scrutiny and, in such circumstances, we must question its validity and reliability. Further problems will arise if this subjective system becomes linked to appraisal. I am not questioning the need for appraisal but teachers and management need to have a more systematic means of monitoring their own development. The Adult Engagement Scale attempts to offer such a system and will I hope contribute to the search for effective means of allowing more objective assessments to be made of teacher quality. Those practitioners who participated in the EEL Project as 'EEL Support Workers' collected and collated data in their settings. Not only were these participant researchers enriched and empowered by this process of evaluating their settings but they were able to register for a nationally accredited award at Certificate level. Adult workers should be given these kinds of incentive, particularly those outside the state school system.



Incentives also need to be given to settings to encourage quality assessment and institutional development. Accreditation might be given to settings similar to the 'Investors in People' scheme so that settings can display their professional credentials to clients. The EEL Project gives every participating setting a handsomely printed certificate to display which acknowledges their participation in the programme. On such small tokens might rest the beginning of an awareness for investing in setting and staff development. As Ball (1994) commented there is little external incentive at present for many practitioners and settings to develop the quality of their provision. These incentives should be offered.

#### **7.1.14 Empowerment**

The feedback questionnaires sent in by the practitioners who had completed the first 9-12 month cycle of their settings' evaluation and development indicated how empowering this total process had been. They suggested the process had been thorough, sometimes difficult and often revealing and informative, but mostly what they said was, that they and their colleagues had been empowered by the process. Many compared it with other inspection processes they had been subjected to which left them feeling threatened and inadequate. One must question the former OFSTED process which separated inspection from development and whose primitive climate of retribution was justified to me by one Senior Primary HMI in truly Machiavellian terms thus, 'a little bit of fear can be a useful thing' (Research Diary, May 1994). True development recognises where people are and seeks to support them in moving forward, albeit, incrementally. The ipsitive approach of 'improving on previous best', a modern industrial management model, is a more sustaining construct. It allows for those who may be less developed and need to improve, and it allows, at the other extreme, the very

best settings to avoid complacency and to continue to strive.

### **7.1.15 Autonomy**

Autonomy remains the least addressed element in Adult Engagement and much of what happens in practice is thereby impoverished. Yet my suspicion is that it may turn out to be the most important element in long term cognitive and social development (Schweinhart et al., 1983). But Autonomy is about something else. It is about giving power to individuals, even or especially children, to make decisions about their lives and to be encouraged to ask, not to always answer, questions. The questioning child grows into a democrat and as we approach the millennium perhaps we need to ask what it is we wish to achieve in the future. If we want to replace the merely adequate with the exceptional, we must look to this issue. A strong society needs strong children who need strong educators. In this way we all become able to assert and defend our rights. Engagers, as the French word implies, were risk takers. Perhaps what is needed is a little more adventure and a little less acquiescence, a little more assertiveness and a little less agreeableness, a little less conformity and a little more risk taking. Perhaps, too, it is time to go back to frameworks which acknowledge humanity, empathy, and emotional well being, which will enrich and extend our utilitarian models.

## **7.2 Recommendations**

### **7.2.1 Policy:**

- \* A policy for the education of young children which encourages pro-active collaboration not competition, recognises the inter related roles of all providers and is led by the education sector.*
- \* The appointment of a neighbourhood 'outreach' support coordinator in every school with appropriate resourcing.*

- \* A unified, agreed, accessible and scientific system of quality control offering supported self evaluation and which is externally validated .*
- \* A more comprehensive view of outcome measures in early childhood, including assessment of dispositions, multiple intelligences, prosocial education and the acknowledgement of the importance of the affective domain.*
- \* More incentives to settings to improve their quality and staff development.*
- \* More recognition and resources, and more non-contact time for educators.*
- \* More promotion opportunities and incentives for those who choose to work directly with children.*
- \* A proactive campaign to involve men more in the education, care and upbringing of children professionally and at home.*
- \* A policy that perceives and conceives of education as more than utilitarian.*
- \* The creation of a Ministry for Children.*

#### **7.2.2 Research:**

- \* More research work on the conceptualisation of evaluation in early childhood settings and on the development of valid, reliable and scientific evaluation instruments.*
- \* More focus on process variables in quality assessment.*
- \* Closer links between psychological and educational theory and praxis.*
- \* More 'real world' research, involving practitioners and meaningful to them.*
- \* Further development of the EEL materials for use in a wider context and the standardisation of the key instruments.*
- \* The links between engagement and involvement need to be explored, particularly in relation to a notion of an optimum level of*

*Autonomy.*

- \* More research into the characteristics of early childhood educators.*

#### *7.2.3 Practice*

- \* More acknowledgement and links to parents, deeper levels of involvement, including inclusion in assessment, access to research instruments and materials to make informed choices.*
- \* A recognition in all settings of the importance of stimulation, and autonomy in the teaching and learning process.*

#### *7.2.4 Training:*

- \* Theories and skills related to parental partnership to be an essential part of initial training for educators.*
- \* More cross-sector joint forums and courses to explore shared meanings and practice.*
- \* More modularised and accessible appropriate and accredited training opportunities for all early childhood workers.*
- \* More multi-disciplinary early childhood degree level courses which offer open access (especially to NNEBs) .*

### **7.3 Towards a Theory of Adult Educative Dispositions**

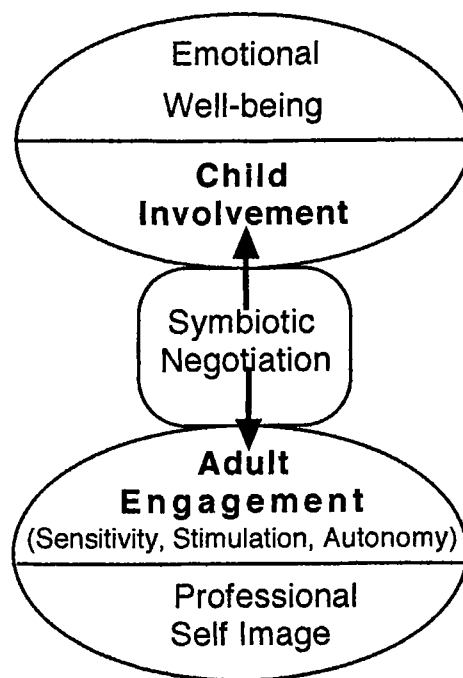
There is a move in the UK, certainly at policy level, to refocus the debate centred on children's learning to new considerations about the role of the adult. Whilst agreeing with the shift in emphasis, it concerns me if this is going to lead to a retrenchment of simplistic didactic and interventionist models of interaction. My main focus in this study has been in formulating a view of the educative adult that incorporates and confirms some of the

knowledge that we have acquired over the last 50 years from such as Vygotsky, Piaget, Rogers, Bruner, Donaldson and Laevers. It is, perhaps, best summarised by Jung

If there is anything that we wish to change in the child, we should first examine it and see whether it is not something that could better be changed in ourselves.

Jung, 1932

I now want to return to the conceptual model discussed in Chapter 5 (see figure 14) to suggest a 'Theory of Adult Educative Dispositions', which I have generated through my research.



**Figure 14; The Process Variables**

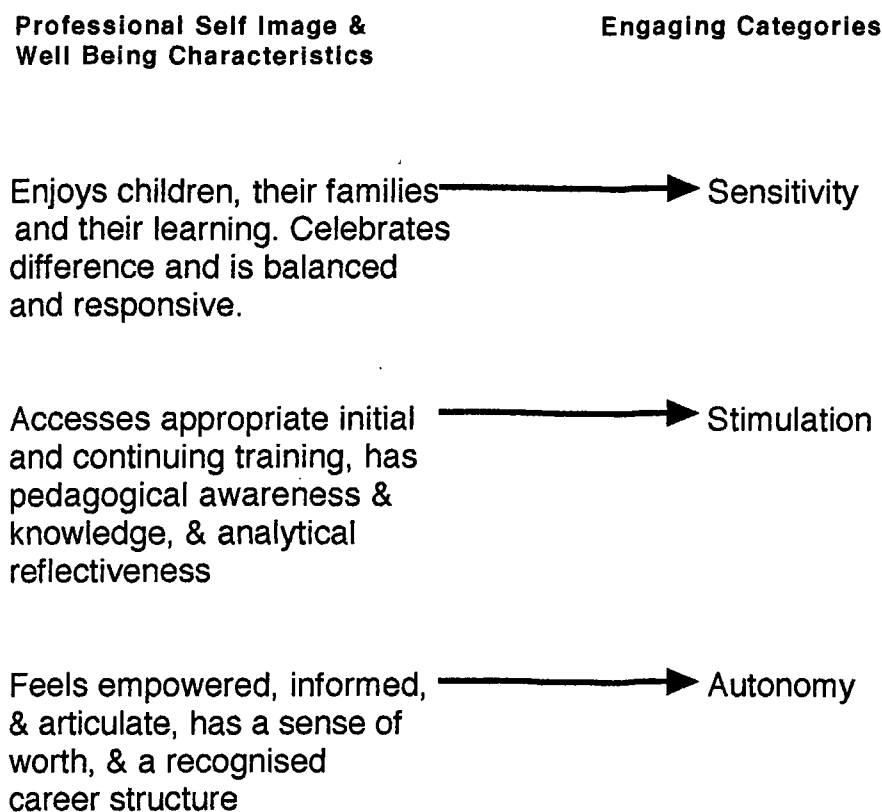
The Theory of Adult Educative Dispositions, as befits the post modernist age in which we live (Usher and Edwards, 1994), is a framework of explanations, which builds on past knowledge, is informed by new evidence and leaves

opportunity for interpretations and development. I hope that it also provides an original perspective and thus contributes to the progress of the debate. What I have in mind here is that just as the child's curiosity and cognitive involvement rests on the bedrock of the child's emotional well being, so this is mirrored by the analogous relationship between the adult's professional self concept and professional well being and her ability to be 'engaging'. If children are strong in their emotional well being then their capacity for learning is enhanced. Similarly, if adults feel valued, recognised, empowered, articulate and knowledgeable, their capacity to be 'engaging' is increased.

There is evidence (Skinner et al., 1993) that Engagement and Involvement interact in what I have termed 'symbiotic negotiation'. Involvement and Engagement are interdependent in two ways. Firstly, when children show high levels of Involvement, adults become more Engaging and when adults are more Engaging, children show more Involvement. I call this a symbiotic relationship. Secondly, in settings where adults and children show high levels of Engagement and Involvement, they negotiate their educative interactions, each responding to and acknowledging the wishes and actions of the other. The adult always retains responsibility but encourages and allows the children to negotiate some control over their learning and responsibility for their actions. I call this interdependent 'give and take' between adult and child, 'Negotiation'. Negotiation works through synergy, joint interaction for an agreed course. Thus, Involvement and Engagement interact through a process of Symbiotic Negotiation (Figure 13).

If the engaging adult is to be successful she must display certain qualities and these will in turn depend on her personal characteristics. I want to

hypothesise a direct link between the three Engagement characteristics and practitioners reported positions with regard to their work, as evidenced in the Professional Biographies, the Participant Interviews and the Observational Data. These can be summarised by the following diagram (Figure 39).



**Figure 39: The Relationship between the Three Categories of Engagement and Professional Self Image and Well Being.**

If we consider that the influence of personality, education and experience are the main means of forming effective practitioners, we could argue that each of these affects the Adult Educative Dispositions differentially. The 'Sensitive' attributes come mainly from the basis of the personality with some lesser influence from training and experience. They are the attributes most easily recognised in early childhood educators and are closely linked to the depth

of their motivation and commitment. The 'Stimulation' attributes, however, are more dependent on appropriate training and reflective professional experience, though susceptibility to their influence will be dependent on personality too. 'Autonomy' attributes are influenced by personality in that outgoing, stronger personalities are perhaps more likely to be confident about devolving decision making to children. Confidence of this kind and awareness of the importance of giving autonomy to children can also come from training. But it is in the 'Autonomous' attributes that we find the greatest influence of experience. Here I am speaking of the professional and the personal experiences of the effective educatress, her professional and personal well being and self image. If her professional and life experiences have given her confidence, openness and a generous spirit, if she herself is empowered, then it is more likely that she will be able to give this attribute to her children. If she feels her 'self' and her work are given acknowledgement, encouragement, recognition and status, she will perform this crucial role more effectively. Despite evidence (Nias, 1989) that managers in early childhood settings devote a large proportion of their interactions with staff to praising them, it would seem that early years' workers are not empowered and generally not effective as autonomy givers. Nor are they effective assessors of autonomous situations. Yet the indication from the data of this study is that when all three elements of Engagement are present in an interaction, it is Autonomy that most directly predicts Involvement.

#### **7.4 Epilogue**

If Autonomy has this degree of influence on children's learning, and if it, in turn, is dependent, more than any other Adult Educative Disposition, on professional and personal self image and well being, then the development of the effective early childhood educator needs acknowledgement as much



as she needs appropriate training. Sadly, the reality is that not only has her work been traditionally seen as low status, but initiatives arising from the ideology of right wing policy influencers (Lawlor, 1994) seems to be bringing new humiliations. An new inspection process that minimally requires those doing the monitoring to have level 2, a system of underfunded vouchers that has the effect of excluding the higher paid, trained professional, an attempt to introduce a 'mum's army', an inspection process which undervalues the core elements of her work: these initiatives, whatever their debatable direct effects, send messages about policy makers views of early childhood workers. This is not conducive to personal and professional self image. It is entirely appropriate for policy makers in a period of greater accountability to be concerned to improve effectiveness in the provision for young children. If they wish to increase the effectiveness of early childhood educators, however, they should look first at the effect of their policies on the professional well being and self image of practitioners .

Early years' educators are deeply, personally and emotionally committed to their work and their children. They have a strong sense of vocation and dedication and a sensitivity to their children. They see appropriate training as an essential means of professional improvement. What they need are resources to support access to it, and acknowledgement that the affective domain in which they excel is one which is recognised as fundamental to young children's development. But this is not enough. What they also need is help from the research community to find the means to scientifically assess their practice, to have greater reward and status for the demanding work they do, and to shake free from domestication to become empowered. I hope this thesis will make a contribution to that aspiration. Flowers for too long have bloomed and faded unseen on the forest floor.

## **Appendices**

### **List of Appendices ( The contents of each appendix are unnumbered)**

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## **Appendix i**

The Guidelines set out in the EEL Manual for supporting EEL researcher/practitioners in locating and collating evidence in their settings for the compilation of the Evaluation Report are given overleaf.

# Notes of Guidance for writing the Evaluation Report

The information collected by all participants during the EEL Evaluation process (Steps 1 - 6) needs to be condensed by the EEL Support Worker into the format set out in the Evaluation Report.

This process will take time and realistically should be completed by one person: the EEL Support Worker. Allowance for this needs to be made by the Manager of the setting.

The Evaluation Report is set out in 13 sections. Section 2 provides pages on which to compile graphs for the observation results from Child Tracking, Child Involvement and Adult Engagement. These graphs are to be used as evidence to support your statements within the appropriate dimension of your text.

Sections 3 - 13 follow a format which:

1. describes the question to be addressed
2. lists the data you will use.

In each section you will need to:

1. answer all the questions.
2. Use the data listed to analyse the qualitative data rigorously and systematically, and use the information to support your statements.

**Some techniques you might consider:**

- use a highlighter pen to pick out key phrases in documents and interviews,
- where there are differing views, say so e.g. "one teacher expressed the idea that ..... but others thought .....",
- do not get 'bogged down' in too much detail but try to make sure the central points are included, e.g. "there was wide ranging agreement about the purpose of ..... but some disagreement about the need to .....",
- presentation: break up text with line breaks and illustrative photographs,
- group similar comments together with phrases e.g. "a number of parents felt ...",
- avoid personal comment as you are simply presenting evidence ,
- look for conflicting issues that need to be examined e.g. differences between what is said and what is revealed by the observations,
- do not use names but do identify perspective e.g. "one child thought ...", "a parent commented.."
- use the information from the graphs and include quotes and stories to illustrate the points you want to make - these bring the Evaluation Report alive!

All participants should read the Evaluation Report asking themselves, "is this a fair picture of our setting?" After incorporating the amendments and redrafting to include significant comments, the resultant report can be bound. Some settings have completed extra copies both for governors and parents.

## **Appendix ii.**

The Action Plan Proforma from the EEL Manual which the Practitioner/Researchers complete and agree with their colleagues is set out overleaf.

# EFFECTIVE EARLY LEARNING RESEARCH PROJECT



## ACTION PLAN

EEL SUPPORT WORKER: .....

NAME AND ADDRESS OF SETTING: .....

.....

.....

.....

DATE: .....

## ACTION PLAN

1. Issues arising from Evaluation Report	2. Aims of Action Plan	3. Action to be undertaken

## ACTION PLAN

4. Resources	5. Responsibilities	6. Time scale	7. Evidence of achievement



### **Appendix iii.**

An example of the Final Report Proforma completed by the Practitioner/ Researcher at the end of the Development Phase is given overleaf.

# EFFECTIVE EARLY LEARNING RESEARCH PROJECT



## FINAL REPORT

EEL SUPPORT WORKER: .....

NAME AND ADDRESS OF SETTING: .....

.....

.....

.....

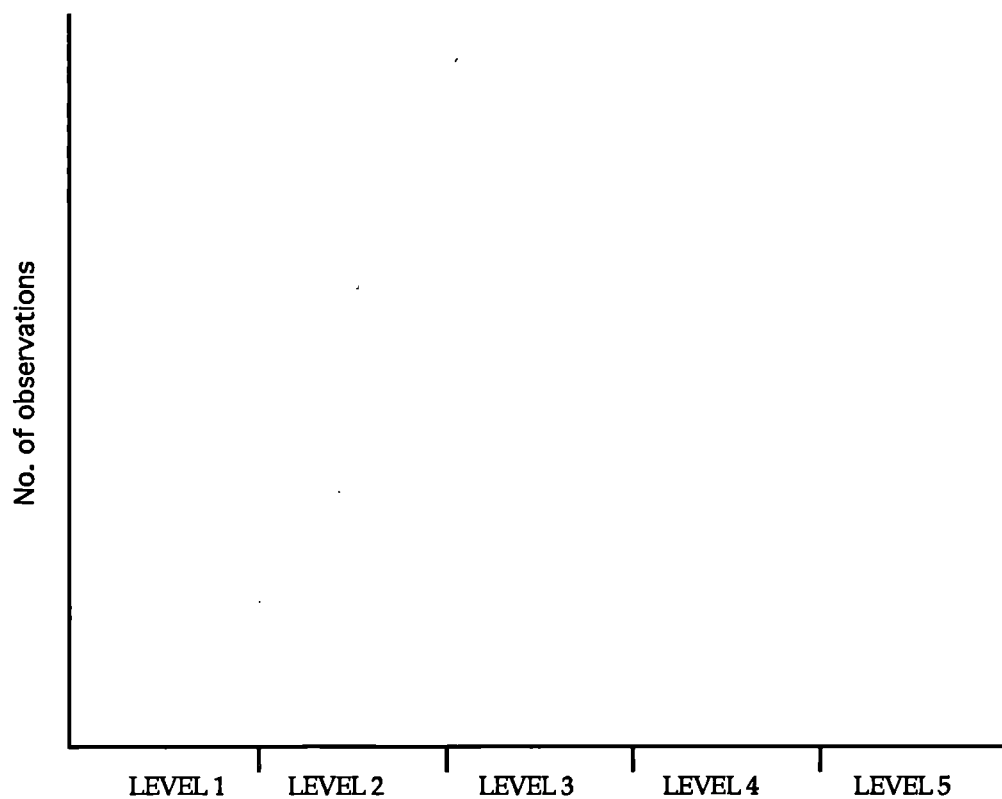
DATE: .....

AIMS OF ACTION PLAN.

ACTION UNDERTAKEN.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND EVIDENCE FOR THIS.  
(further pages may be added here if required)

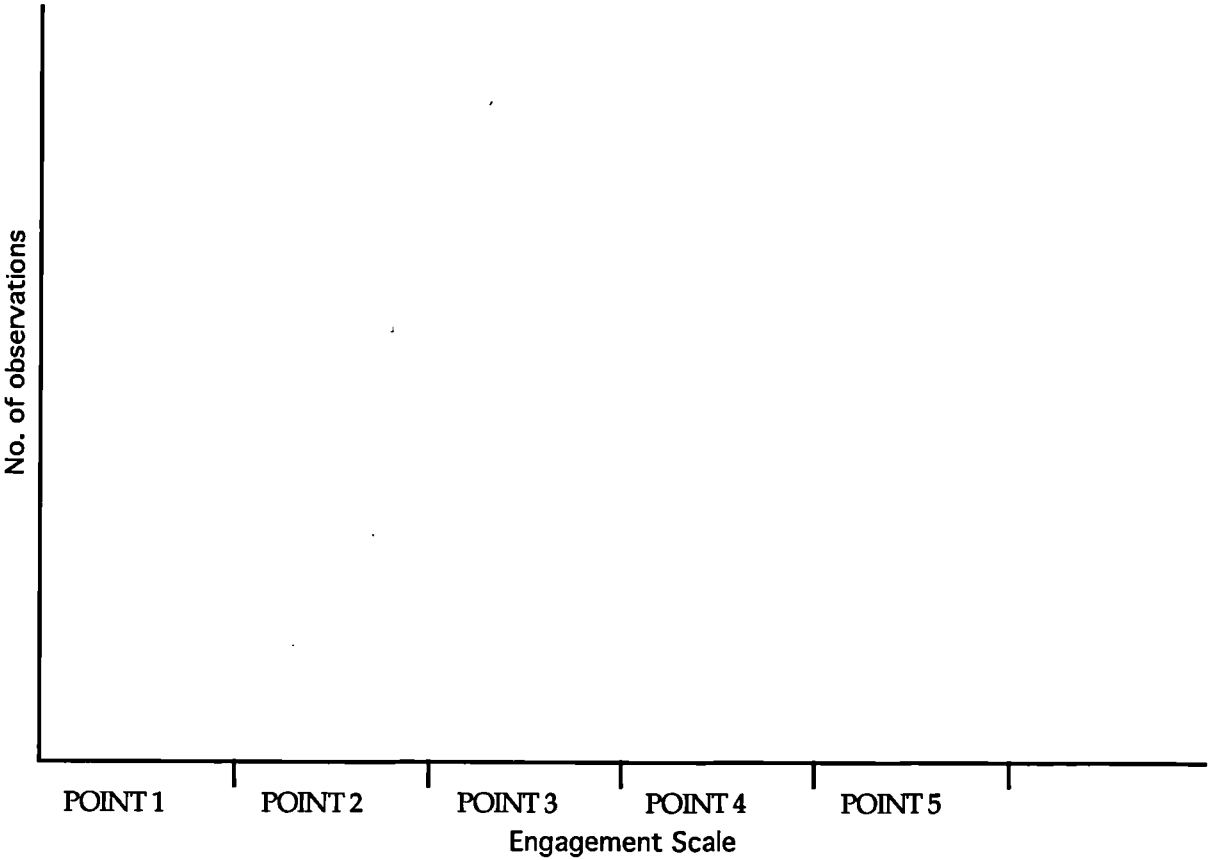
## CHILD INVOLVEMENT SCALE: Results of second round of observations.



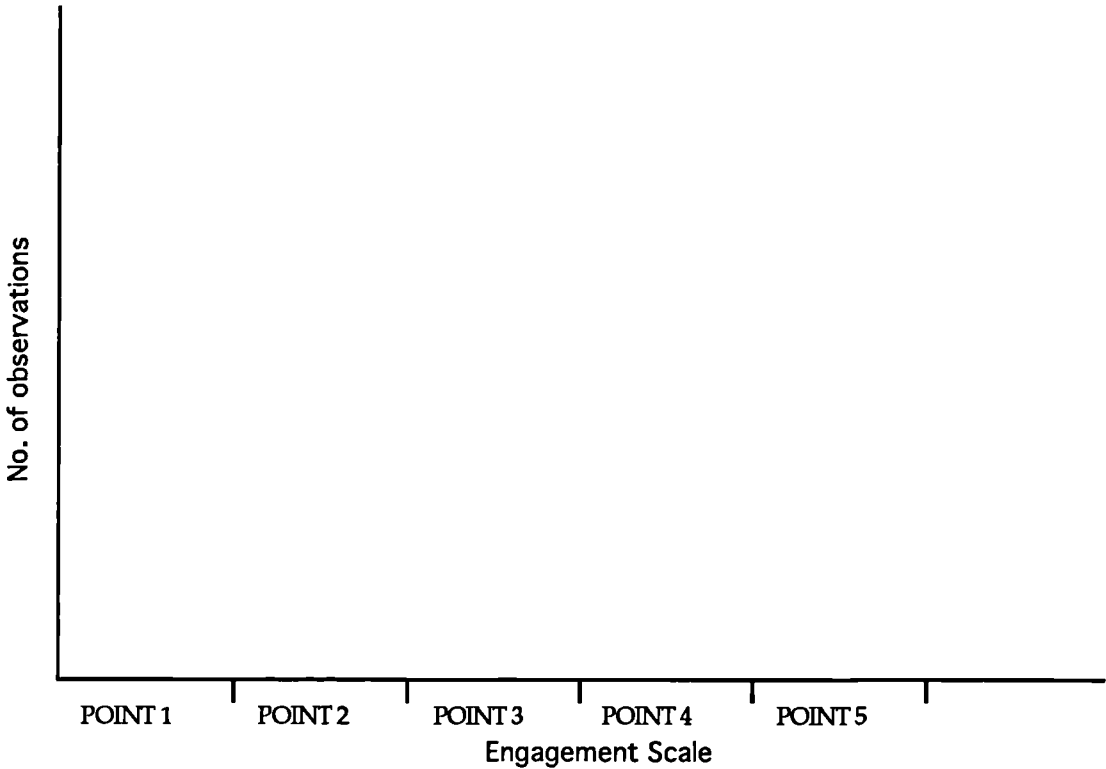
Comparison with first round.

ADULT STYLE OBSERVATION SCALE: Results of second round of observations.

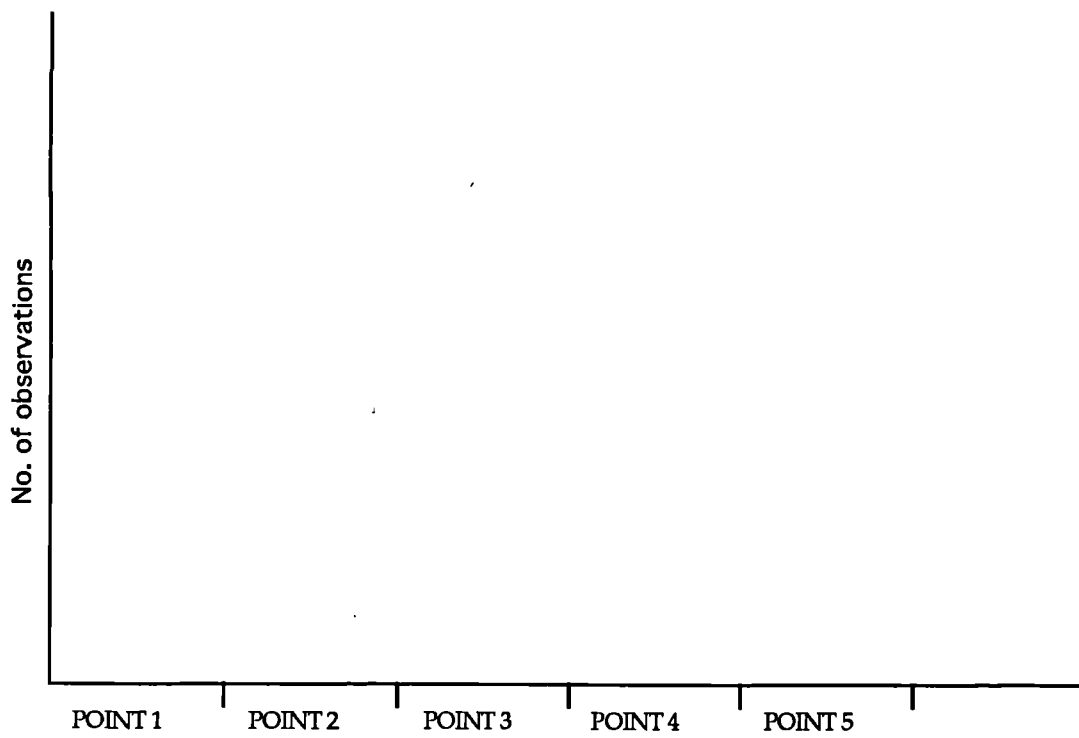
1. SENSITIVITY



2. STIMULATION



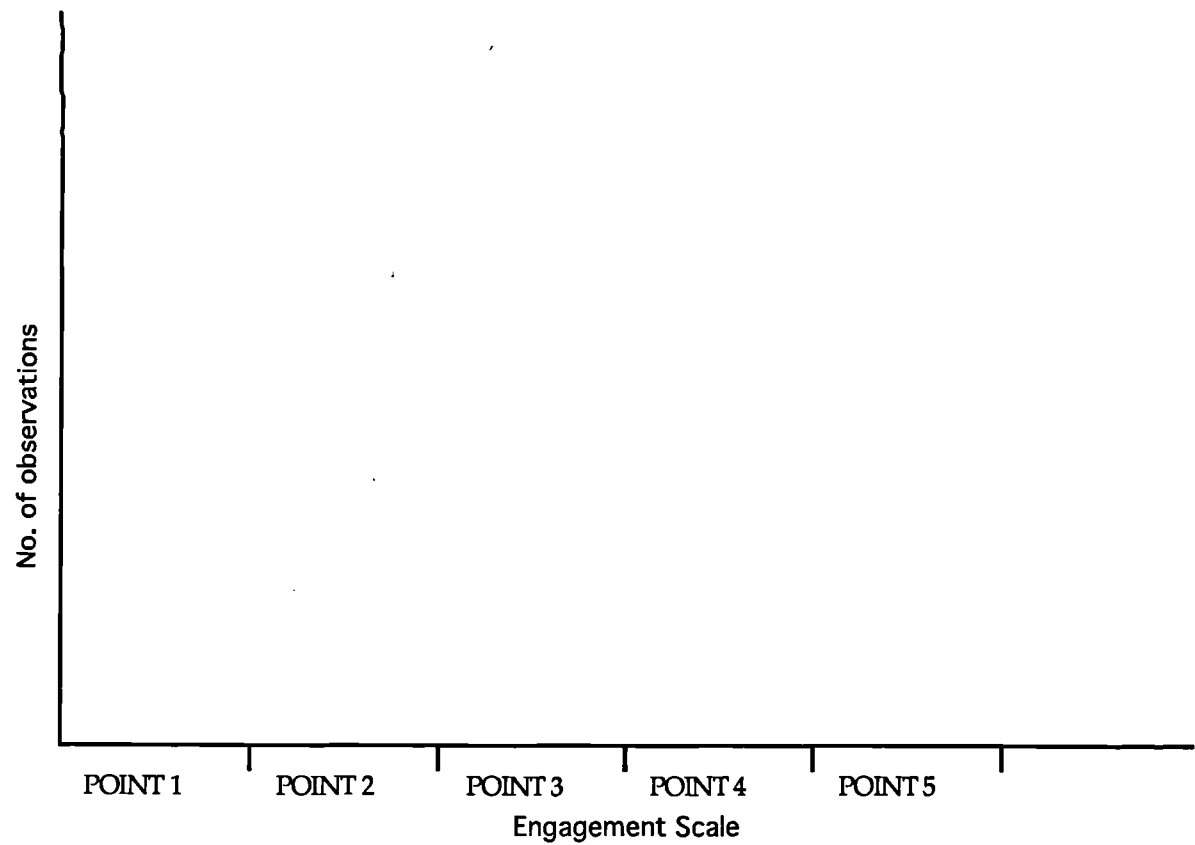
### 3. AUTONOMY



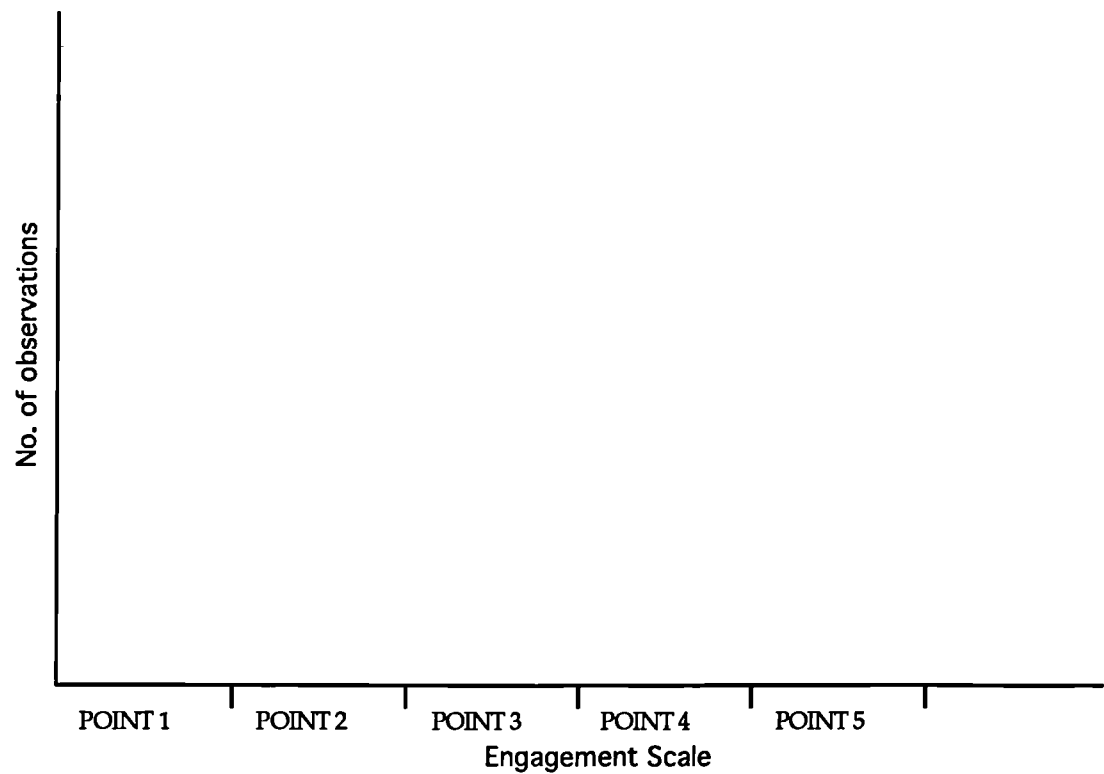
Comparision with first round.

ADULT SUPPORTIVE INTERVENTION SCALE: (Results of second round of observations where appropriate.)

1. SENSITIVITY

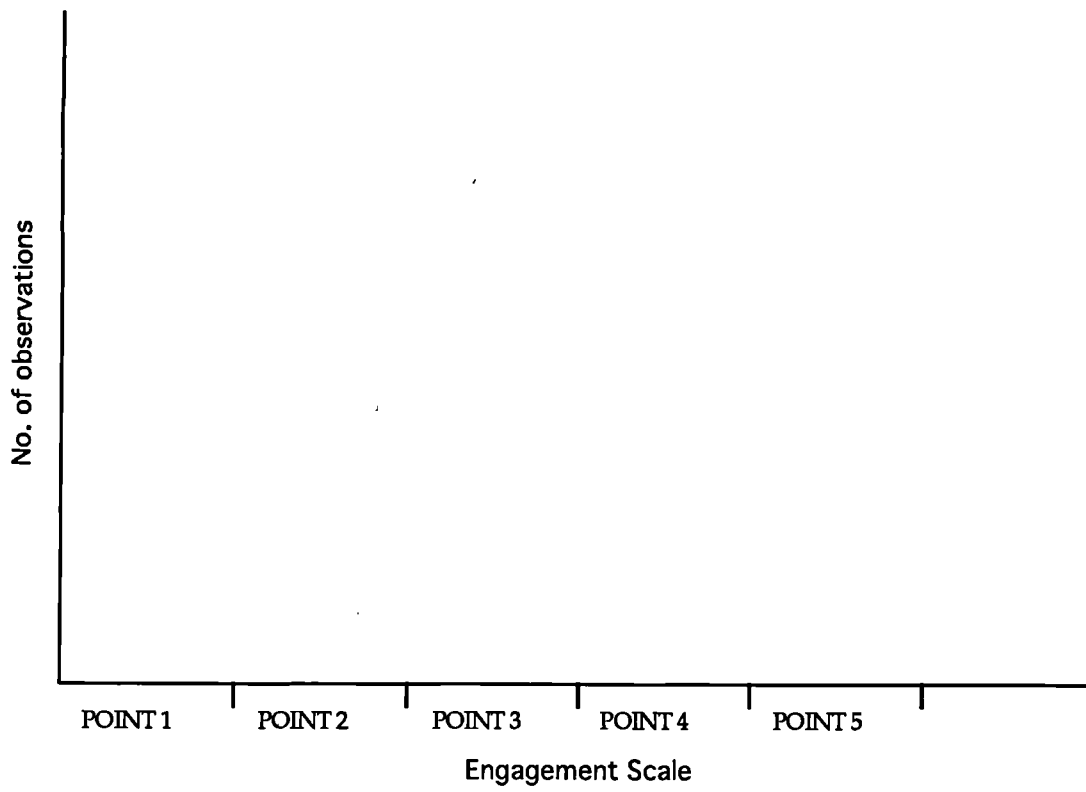


2. STIMULATION





### 3. AUTONOMY



Comparison with first round.

REFLECTIONS OF PARTICIPANTS ON THE PROCESS:

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT:

## **Appendix iv.**

An example of the feedback evaluation report on their setting's experience of the EEL Project which is sent in after the completion of the twelve month development cycle, is shown overleaf.

## **EFFECTIVE EARLY LEARNING RESEARCH PROJECT**

### **EEL PROJECT FEEDBACK**

What aspects of the project have you liked?

What aspects of the project have you found difficult?

Do you feel the Evaluation Report was useful, and any suggestions?

How important was the support of your cluster group to the process?

How could the process be improved?

Please comment on the effect that the project has had on you, your practice, the children etc.

Will you continue to use any of the EEL research process in the future?

Any other comments?

## **Appendix v.**

**An example of the Professional Biography Questionnaire completed by all participants in the research cohort is shown overleaf.**

# PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHIES QUESTIONNAIRE

JOB TITLE .....

5. Why did you become an early childhood educator ?

6. How would you like your job to progress ?

7. What would help you ?

8. What staff development opportunities -

- are available?

- have you taken up?

- would you like to have?

ANY OTHER COMMENTS?

## **Appendix v.**

An example of the foccussed Staff Interview Schedules used in collecting data is shown overleaf. The relevant questions analysed as part of this study were those on Learning and Teaching Styles (q.3), Staffing (q.5) and Relationships and Interactions (q.7).



# STEP 3

## Interviews

The number of interviews undertaken may need to be adapted according to the size of the setting. Use the following as a guide:

- Interview manager using Manager Interview Schedule as a prompt.
- Interview a sample of staff (involved with the study children), up to a maximum of 5 . Use Staff Interview Schedule as a prompt.
- Interview a sample of parents, up to a maximum of 5, using Parent Interview Schedule as a prompt.
- Interview a sample of children, up to a maximum of 5, using Child Interview Schedule and photographs as a prompt.
- Settings may wish to interview the Chair of the Governing Body or the Management Committee. The Governor Interview Schedule may be used as a prompt.
- We suggest that notes are taken as the interview progresses. The interview does not have to be written word for word but the main points must be captured. Although key phrases or particularly powerful sentences should be noted, it is the overall meaning of the responses that are most important.
- The interviews could be audiotaped and the main points pulled out. This might allow a more informal discussion.
- Show the interviewee what has been written and explain how it is going to be used.
- **The Interview Schedules are intended to be used only as a guide. Please adapt each question to suit the interviewee.**

## Documents used in Step 3:

- Manager Interview Schedule
- Staff Interview Schedule
- Parents' Interview Schedule
- Children's Interview Schedule
- Optional Governor Interview Schedule

# STAFF

## Interview schedule

A range of personnel should be invited for interview and where possible they should be interviewed individually. Each interview will take a maximum of 20 minutes, with the following schedule acting as a prompt. Notes from the interview should be recorded as the conversation progresses.

### **1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

- a. What do you feel the aims and objectives of this setting are?
- b. What do you feel the aims and objectives of this setting are as regards children with SEN?

### **2. LEARNING EXPERIENCES/CURRICULUM**

- a. What learning experiences do you offer to the children?
- b. Do you alter your curriculum to take into account the needs of children with SEN?

### **3. LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGIES**

- a. How are children learning from the activities provided?
- b. How do the adults support this learning?
- c. How do you manage and organise the children?
- d. What is the teaching style of the adults?
- e. What kinds of role do the staff perform?
- f. How do you ensure that children with SEN become involved in activities which will particularly benefit their development.

### **4. PLANNING, ASSESSMENT AND RECORD KEEPING**

- a. What part can/or do you play in the planning, assessment and recording of children's learning?
- b. What would you do if you suspected that a child in your care had SEN?

### **5. STAFFING**

- a. What is the ratio of staff to children? Is this adequate?
- b. What is the training level of the staff who work with the children?
- c. How are the staff deployed?
- d. Are all staff in your setting involved in working with children with SEN?

**6. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

- a. In what ways do you feel the learning environment is suitable for young children?
- b. How would you like to improve it?
- c. Can you think of any modifications to your environment which you would like to make to facilitate the accommodation of children with SEN?

**7. RELATIONSHIPS AND INTERACTION**

- a. What kind of relationships are you trying to establish with adults within your setting?
- b. How are these established?
- c. What kind of relationships are you trying to establish with children within your setting?
- d. How are individuals catered for?

**8. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

- a. How are equal opportunities issues addressed in this setting?

**9. PARENTAL PARTNERSHIP, HOME AND COMMUNITY LIAISON**

- a. How are parents involved in the children's learning?
- b. What links are there between home/community and the setting?

**10. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

- a. How is quality ensured in the setting?
- b. How easy is it for you to gain access to expert advice to ensure quality of provision for children with SEN in your setting?

**Any other comments.**

## Appendix vi.

A complete list of the defined sub-nodes used in the NUD.IST analysis of the data created inductively from the questionnaire responses to the following items from setting adults about their professional biography is given overleaf.

Node (1 1)	prof.biog/*pb.1.	What training have you had?
Node (1 2)	prof.biog/*pb.2.	What qualifications do you hold?
Node (1 3)	prof.biog/*pb.3.	What experience do you have?
Node (1 4)	prof.biog/*pb.4.	What role do you feel you perform in this setting?
Node (1 5)	prof.biog/*pb.5.	Why did you become an early childhood educator?
Node (1 6)	prof.biog/*pb.6.	How would you like your job to progress
Node (1 7)	prof.biog/*pb.7.	What would help you (progress)?
Node (1 8)	prof.biog/*pb8	What staff development opportunities 1)have you access to, 2)have attended, 3) would like?

Q.S.R. NUD.IST Power version, revision 3.0.5.

Licensee: 3-MP30E.

PROJECT: PhD, User Tony, 5:48 pm, Jun 3, 1996.

(1) / prof.biog

\* Definition: **Questionnaire responses from settling adults about their professional biography.**

(1 1) / prof.biog/\*pb1.

\* Definition: **What training have you had?**

\*\*\*\*\*

(1 1 1) / prof.biog/\*pb1./nit.

\* Definition: Practitioner's Initial training

(1 1 1 1) / prof.biog/\*pb1./nit./T.Ed. (EY) deg.

\* Definition: Teacher education at degree level specific to early years; BEd, PGCE

(1 1 1 2) / prof.biog/\*pb1./nit./T.Ed Non-sp Deg.

\* Definition: Teacher education to degree level but not specific to Early Years, PGCE,

(1 1 1 3) / prof.biog/\*pb1./nit./Cert Ed.

\* Definition:

Certificate of Education

(1 1 1 4) / prof.biog/\*pb1./nit./non TEd deg.

\* Definition: A degree without teacher education

(1 1 1 5) / prof.biog/\*pb1./nit./NNEB, BTec

\* Definition: Diploma level Nursery Nurse, B.Tech.

(1 1 1 6) / prof.biog/\*pb1./nit./PLA Fo

\* Definition: PLA Foundation Course

(1 1 1 7) / prof.biog/\*pb1./nit./PLA Cert.

\* Definition: PLA Certificate level

(1 1 1 8) / prof.biog/\*pb1./nit./PLA Dip

\* Definition: Preschool Learning Alliance Diploma level

(1 1 3) / prof.biog/\*pb1./Gen. E Y rel.

\* Definition: Any training which has a relevance to children

(1 1 4) / prof.biog/\*pb1./Other Tr.

\* Definition: Other training which is not related to children

(1 1 5) / prof.biog/\*pb1./None

\* Definition: No training at all

(1 2) / prof.biog/\*pb2.

**\* Definition: What qualifications do you hold?**

\*\*\*\*\*

(1 2 1) /prof.biog/\*pb2./PGrad. (EY)

\* Definition: Post graduate qualification specific to the early years, MEd, MA, PhD

(1 2 2) /prof.biog/\*pb2./Deg Level

\* Definition: Degree level qualification

(1 2 2 1) /prof.biog/\*pb2./Deg Level/BEd (EY)

\* Definition: Bachelor of Education with Early Years specified

(1 2 2 2) /prof.biog/\*pb2./Deg Level/BEd non EY

\* Definition: Degree level teacher education BEd, BA, but not specific to Early Years

(1 2 2 3) /prof.biog/\*pb2./Deg Level/PGCE (EY)

\* Definition: Post graduate Certificate in Education, Early Years

(1 2 2 4) /prof.biog/\*pb2./Deg Level/PGCE non EY

\* Definition: PGCE but not specialised in Early Years

(1 2 2 5) /prof.biog/\*pb2./Deg Level/BA BSc

\* Definition: Non teacher education degrees

(1 2 3) /prof.biog/\*pb2./CertEd EY

\* Definition: Certificate in education Early Years specific

(1 2 4) /prof.biog/\*pb2./Cert Ed non EY

\* Definition: Certificate in Education not early years specific

(1 2 5) /prof.biog/\*pb2./Diploma level: EYears

\* Definition: Diploma in Nursery Nursing, NNEB, BTech

(1 2 6) /prof.biog/\*pb2./PLA Qualifications

\* Definition: Diploma, Foundation, Certificate

(1 2 6 1) /prof.biog/\*pb2./PLA Qualifications/Dip.

\* Definition: PLA Diploma

(1 2 6 2) /prof.biog/\*pb2./PLA Qualifications/Found.

\* Definition: PLA Foundation

(1 2 6 3) /prof.biog/\*pb2./PLA Qualifications/Cert.

\* Definition: PLA Certificate

\*

(1 2 7) /prof.biog/\*pb2./GCSE 4 more

\* Definition: GCSE/ O levels, 4 or more

(1 2 8) /prof.biog/\*pb2./GCSE 3 less

\* Definition: GCSE or O levels, 3 or less

(1 2 9) /prof.biog/\*pb2./Other

\* Definition: Other qualifications: Piano, typing, first aid etc.

(1 2 10) /prof.biog/\*pb2./NVQ

\* Definition: National vocational qualifications

(1 2 10 1) / prof.biog/\*pb2./NVQ/L4 more

\* Definition: N V Q Level 4 or more

(1 2 10 2) / prof.biog/\*pb2./NVQ/GNVQ 3 less

\* Definition: GNVQ level 3 or less

(1 2 11) / prof.biog/\*pb2./None

\* Definition: no recognised qualifications

(1 3) / prof.biog/\*pb.3

\* Definition: **What experience do you have?**

\*\*\*\*\*

(1 3 1) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Pattern

\* Definition: Pattern of Experience

(1 3 1 2) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Pattern/Single 0-8

\* Definition: The experience has been wholly within one sector and within the age range

\*

(1 3 1 3) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Pattern/Multi; 1 Sect

\* Definition: Multiple experiences within one sector, eg Taught different ages outside

(1 3 1 4) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Pattern/Cross 0-8

\* Definition: Cross sector (PLA/ Education/Private/Health/Social services) but always with 0-8

(1 3 1 5) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Pattern/Cross + Diff

\* Definition: Experience has been both cross sector and with other ages outside the 0-8

(1 3 2) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type

\* Definition: Type of experience

(1 3 2 1) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/General

\* Definition: General child care roles

(1 3 2 1 1) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/General /Paid

\* Definition: Paid general worker, child minder, play centre, nanny, flight crew

(1 3 2 1 1 1) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/General /Paid/EY 0-5

\* Definition: Copy of node (1 3 2 8 1 1) and its subtree.

(1 3 2 1 1 1 1) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/General /Paid/EY 0-5/Under 2yr

\* Definition: Teaching EY for less than 2 years

(1 3 2 1 1 1 2) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/General /Paid/EY 0-5/EY 2-5

\* Definition: Teaching Early years for between 2 and 5 years

(1 3 2 1 1 1 3) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/General /Paid/EY 0-5/EY 5-10

\* Definition: Teaching Early Years between 5-10 years

(1 3 2 1 1 1 4) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/General /Paid/EY 0-5/EY 10-15

\* Definition: Teaching Early Years for between 10 and 15 years

(1 3 2 1 1 1 5) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/General /Paid/EY 0-5/EY 15+

\*Definition: Teaching Early years for longer than 15 years

In the interest of brevity in this appendix I shall not repeat the length of experience nodes for each role type worker but just state the type of workers covered in defined nodes under this section each have five length of experience nodes; 0-2, 2-5, 5-10, 10-15, 15+ years

(1 3 2 5) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/PLA Exp.

\* Definition: Experience in a PLA setting

(1 3 2 5 2) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/PLA Exp./Paid Help

\* Definition: a paid helper in a PLA

(1 3 2 5 3) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/PLA Exp./Vol Help

\* Definition: A voluntary helper in a PLA

(1 3 2 5 4) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/PLA Exp./Supervisor

\* Definition: Supervisor in a PLA: years of experience

(1 3 2 6) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/Private

\* Definition: Private nursery

(1 3 2 6 1) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/Private/Paid help

(1 3 2 6 3) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/Private/Super.

\* Definition: Years of experience of Supervisors in PLA

(1 3 2 6 3 2) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/Private/Super./ EY 5-8

\* Definition: Teaching Early Years 5-8

(1 3 2 6 3 3) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/Private/Super./Later P

\* Definition: Teaching later primary 9-11 years

(1 3 2 6 3 5) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/Private/Super./Sec.

\* Definition: Secondary teaching experience, post 11years

(1 3 2 7) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/Soc.S.Health

\* Definition: Social services provision Experience in Social services and Health

(1 3 2 8 1) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/School/Teach

\* Definition: Copy of node (1 3 2 1) and its subtree.

(1 3 2 8 1 1) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/School/Teach/EY 0-5

\* Definition: Teaching 0-5 years age

(1 3 2 8 1 2) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/School/Teach/ EY 5-8 years

\* Definition: Teaching Early Years 5-8

(1 3 2 8 1 3) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/School/Teach/Later Primary

\* Definition: Teaching later primary 9-11 years

(1 3 2 8 1 5) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/School/Teach/Secondary.

\* Definition:

Secondary teaching experience, post 11years

(1 3 2 8 2) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/School/NTA



\* Definition: Non Teaching Assistant experience in schools  
Copy of node (1 3 2 2) .

(1 3 2 8 3) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/School/Q Cl. Ass  
\* Definition: Qualified Classroom Assistant experience in schools  
Copy of node (1 3 2 3) .

(1 3 2 8 4) / prof.biog/\*pb.3/Type/School/Vol. Cl. Ass.  
\* Definition: Voluntary Classroom Assistant experience in schools  
Copy of node (1 3 2 4) .

(1 4) / prof.biog/\*pb4.  
\* Definition: **What role do you feel you perform in this setting?**  
\*\*\*\*\*

(1 4 1) / prof.biog/\*pb4./Manager  
\* Definition: Team leader, staff manager, supervisor, administrator, marketing,

(1 4 2) / prof.biog/\*pb4./Memb. team  
\* Definition: Member of a team

(1 4 3) / prof.biog/\*pb4./educator  
\* Definition: teaching and educator, developer of children, creating a stimulating environ

(1 4 4) / prof.biog/\*pb4./carer  
\* Definition: caring for children, creating a safe & caring environment

(1 4 5) / prof.biog/\*pb4./assist.  
\* Definition: ancilliary support, assistance, supporting another

(1 4 6) / prof.biog/\*pb4./planner  
\* Definition: planning, preparation, assessment and record keeping

(1 4 7) / prof.biog/\*pb4./curr. resp.  
\* Definition: a particular responsibility for an area of the curriculum, post holder

(1 4 8) / prof.biog/\*pb4./spec. sup.  
\* Definition: specialist support or role in equal opportunities, special needs, multi ethnic

(1 5) / prof.biog/\*pb5.  
\* Definition: **Why did you become an early childhood educator?**  
\*\*\*\*\*

(1 5 1) / prof.biog/\*pb5./like ch.  
\* Definition: likes children, enjoys company and their families

(1 5 2) / prof.biog/\*pb5./earl.amb.  
\* Definition: early ambition, always wanted to be ey worker.

(1 5 3) / prof.biog/\*pb5./pers.dev  
\* Definition: personal & professional development, I have grown

(1 5 4) / prof.biog/\*pb5./ped.int.  
\* Definition: like helping children learn and develop

(1 5 5) / prof.biog/\*pb5./prag.circ.

\* Definition: pragmatic circumstances, eg fits with family commitments

(1 5 6) / prof.biog/\*pb5./int. ch. wel.

\* Definition:

interested in childrens well being

(1 5 7) / prof.biog/\*pb5./job satis.

\* Definition: satisfaction of job, rewards and fulfilments of the work

(1 5 8) / prof.biog/\*pb5./prof. aut.

\* Definition: professional autonomy allows for creativity, responsibility for whole curriculum

(1 5 9) / prof.biog/\*pb5./noth. else

\* Definition: no other options open to me except this work

(1 5 10) / prof.biog/\*pb5./ext. infl.

\* Definition: external influences, career officer, member of staff, etc.

(1 5 11) / prof.biog/\*pb5./psych.need

\* Definition: an emotional and psychological need eg to relive or recreate childhood

(1 5 12) / prof.biog/\*pb5./early.invol.

\* Definition: early involvement with young children eg brownies, church, school

(1 6) / prof.biog/\*pb6.

\* Definition:

### **How would you like your job to progress**

\*\*\*\*\*

(1 6 1) / prof.biog/\*pb6./no plan

\* Definition: No plans, happy as am,

(1 6 2) / prof.biog/\*pb6./prof.dev.

\* Definition: Updating and developing professional qualifications, knowledge and skill

(1 6 3) / prof.biog/\*pb6./more,same exp.

\* Definition: more of the same experience to get better at it

(1 6 4) / prof.biog/\*pb6./more,diff.

\* Definition: more experience, but wider and more diverse e.g. children with special needs

(1 6 5) / prof.biog/\*pb6./man. admin.

\* Definition: more responsibility wanted as manager, administrator or coordinator

(1 6 6) / prof.biog/\*pb6./trainer

\* Definition: want to become an adult trainer, advisor or supervisor in FE, HE, LEA

(1 6 7) / prof.biog/\*pb6./more recog.

\* Definition: more recognition, greater status, more opportunities for progression,

(1 6 8) / prof.biog/\*pb6./work patt.

\* Definition: want to change work pattern full time/part time, permanent temporary

(1 6 9) / prof.biog/\*pb6./not sure

\* Definition: not sure, no answer recorded

(1 7) / prof.biog/\*pb7.

\*\*\* Definition:

### **What would help you (progress)?**

\*\*\*\*\*

(1 7 1) / prof.biog/\*pb7./Time

\* Definition: Having more time

(1 7 2) / prof.biog/\*pb7./diff. exp.

\* Definition: need for wider and different experiences e.g. special needs

(1 7 3) / prof.biog/\*pb7./prof. dev.

\* Definition: need professional development, courses specific to early years, qualifications

(1 7 4) / prof.biog/\*pb7./see others

\* Definition: would like to visit other settings

(1 7 5) / prof.biog/\*pb7./career chg

\* Definition: career change, doing something different

(1 7 6) / prof.biog/\*pb7./resources

\* Definition: more resources, (exclude staff) money, equipment, space, buildings etc.

(1 7 7) / prof.biog/\*pb7./staff

\* Definition: more staff, better ratios, fewer children

(1 7 8) / prof.biog/\*pb7./car.opp.

\* Definition: more career opportunities, a better career ladder

(1 7 9) / prof.biog/\*pb7./ment.

\* Definition: better staff supervision, mentoring, guidance

(1 7 10) / prof.biog/\*pb7./integr.

\* Definition: more integration with other providers, links, liaison, cooperation with

(1 7 11)

\* Definition: more access to parents, support and involvement

(1 7 12) / prof.biog/\*pb7./recogn.

\* Definition: more acknowledgement, recognition and encouragement

(1 7 13) / prof.biog/\*pb7./sal & con

\* Definition: better salary, status and conditions

(1 8) / prof.biog/\*pb8.

\* Definition:

### **What staff development opportunities -**

\*\*\*\*\*

(1 8 1) / prof.biog/\*pb8./avail.

\* Definition: what staff development opportunities are available?

(1 8 1 1) / prof.biog/\*pb8./avail. /lots

\* Definition: many courses available

(1 8 1 2) / prof.biog/\*pb8./avail. /few

\* Definition: limited opportunities or not enough courses

(1 8 1 3) / prof.biog/\*pb8./avail. /types

\* Definition: courses available specified

(1 8 1 3 1) / prof.biog/\*pb8./avail. /types/curriculum

\* Definition: courses related to curriculum areas

(1 8 1 3 1 1) / prof.biog/\*pb8./avail. /types/curriculum/maths

\* Definition: courses with maths as emphasis

(1 8 1 3 1 2) / prof.biog/\*pb8./avail. /types/curriculum/Lang.

\* Definition: Courses related to language and literacy, reading, writing, listening

(1 8 1 3 1 3) / prof.biog/\*pb8./avail. /types/curriculum/Science

\* Definition: Courses related to Science

(1 8 1 3 1 4) / prof.biog/\*pb8./avail. /types/curriculum/human

\* Definition: courses related to human and social

(1 8 1 3 2) / prof.biog/\*pb8./avail. /types/non curr.

\* Definition:

courses which are not specific curriculum areas

(1 8 1 3 2 1) / prof.biog/\*pb8./avail. /types/non curr./e.y.

\* Definition: attended courses specifically for early ye

(1 8 1 3 2 2) / prof.biog/\*pb8./avail. /types/non curr./parents

\* Definition: attended courses for improving relationship with parents

(1 8 1 3 2 3) / prof.biog/\*pb8./avail. /types/non curr./s.e.n.

\* Definition: courses in special needs, for the deaf, etc

(1 8 1 3 2 4) / prof.biog/\*pb8./avail. /types/non curr./staff

\* Definition: on-site staff meetings for development

(1 8 2) / prof.biog/\*pb8./taken

\* Definition: what staff development opportunities have you taken up?

(1 8 2 1) / prof.biog/\*pb8./taken/curric.

\* Definition: courses taken up defined by curriculum subjects

(1 8 2 1 1) / prof.biog/\*pb8./taken/curric./music

\* Definition: courses taken up which are about music

(1 8 2 1 2) / prof.biog/\*pb8./taken/curric./lang.

\* Definition: courses taken up which have been on language issues, reading, writing,

(1 8 2 1 3) / prof.biog/\*pb8./taken/curric./PE

\* Definition: courses on physical activity, dance, games etc.

(1 8 2 1 4) / prof.biog/\*pb8./taken/curric./Art

\* Definition: courses taken up on art, pottery, etc.

(1 8 2 1 5) / prof.biog/\*pb8./taken/curric./science

\* Definition: courses related to science, technology, design etc.

(1 8 2 1 6) / prof.biog/\*pb8./taken/curric./IT

\* Definition: courses undertaken related to information technology, computers etc.

(1 8 2 2) / prof.biog/\*pb8./taken/non-curr.

\* Definition:

courses taken up which are not specific to a curriculum area

(1 8 2 2 1) / prof.biog/\*pb8./taken/non-curr./Assess.

\* Definition: courses undertaken on assessment

(1 8 2 2 2) / prof.biog/\*pb8./taken/non-curr./health

\* Definition: courses undertaken on health education issues

(1 8 2 2 3) / prof.biog/\*pb8./taken/non-curr./SpNeed

\* Definition: courses undertaken for special needs, hearing, vision etc.

(1 8 2 2 4) / prof.biog/\*pb8./taken/non-curr./Ethnic

\* Definition: courses related to ethnic and cultural issues

(1 8 2 2 5) / prof.biog/\*pb8./taken/non-curr./HScope

\* Definition: courses on High scope

(1 8 2 3) / prof.biog/\*pb8./taken/vari.

\* Definition: various courses have been taken up

(1 8 2 4) / prof.biog/\*pb8./taken/own time

\* Definition: only attend courses in own time

(1 8 3) / prof.biog/\*pb8./want

\* Definition: what staff development opportunities would you like to have or do you want?

(1 8 3 1) / prof.biog/\*pb8./want/Eq.Op.

\* Definition: Would like development in equal opportunity issues

(1 8 3 2) / prof.biog/\*pb8./want/In time

\* Definition: Would like development opportunities in work time because of family

(1 8 3 3) / prof.biog/\*pb8./want/NNEB

\* Definition: courses for NNEBs

(1 8 3 4) / prof.biog/\*pb8./want/Sp.Need

\* Definition: courses for educators who are dealing with children with special needs

(1 8 3 5) / prof.biog/\*pb8./want/multi-eth

\* Definition: courses related to multi ethnicity, multi cultural issues

(1 8 3 6) / prof.biog/\*pb8./want/curr.

\* Definition: courses in specific areas of the curriculum

(1 8 3 6 1) / prof.biog/\*pb8./want/curr./art

\* Definition: courses on art /craft

(1 8 3 6 2) / prof.biog/\*pb8./want/curr./maths

\* Definition: courses on maths

(1 8 3 6 3) / prof.biog/\*pb8./want/curr./lang.

\* Definition: courses on language, literacy, reading, writing, etc.

(1 8 3 7) / prof.biog/\*pb8./want/more

\* Definition: would like more courses

(1 8 3 8) / prof.biog/\*pb8./want/E Y

\* Definition: want more focus on early year's issues

(1 8 3 9) / prof.biog/\*pb8./want/plan.

\* Definition: courses on planning, record keeping, assessment

(1 8 3 10) / prof.biog/\*pb8./want/manage.

\* Definition: courses on management

(1 8 3 11) / prof.biog/\*pb8./want/career

\* Definition: advice on career development

(1 8 3 12) / prof.biog/\*pb8./want/practic.

\* Definition: Opportunities for visits to other settings, practical issues

## **Appendix viii.**

An example of a 'Letter of Agreement' signed by the Director of the Project, the Head of the Setting and the EEL External Support work is shown over leaf. It sets out clearly the expectations and roles of each signatory and addresses ethical issues.

# Effective Early Learning Research Project

based at  
**Worcester College of Higher Education**  
Henwick Grove, Worcester WR2 6AJ  
Tel/Fax 01905 855068



## LETTER OF AGREEMENT WITH STUDY SETTING

Name and address of Setting .....

.....

Type of Setting ..... EEL Support Worker .....

EEL Network External Adviser .....

Date .....

We the undersigned jointly confirm our participation in the Effective Early Learning Research Project. Its success depends on us working well together, and understanding our respective roles, which are formally set out below.

### The Effective Early Learning Research Project agrees to:

- ensure that all the information gathered is treated confidentially and identifying names are removed.

### The EEL External Adviser agrees to:

- offer support to the study setting, mainly through regular contact and/or visits to the setting throughout the research period.
- Ensure all written accounts generated are validated by the participants themselves first and only released to a wider audience with the agreement of the head of setting.
- Notify the EEL Project if participation is discontinued.

### The EEL Support Worker agrees to:

- encourage a commitment to the aims of the Project from all staff involved.
- Ensure the Project is built into their staff and institutional development planning.

Four copies of this Letter of Agreement should be signed and distributed to, the following signatories:

Professor C Pascal  
Project Director

Head of study setting

EEL Support Worker EEL

External Advisor

**Please print and sign names**



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